

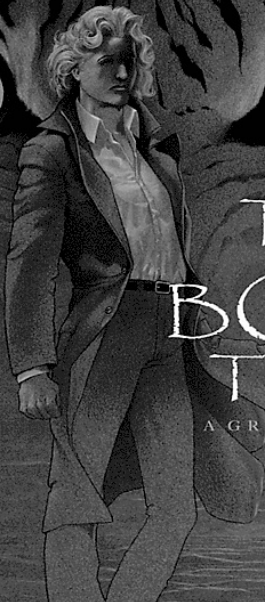
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SICILIAN DRAGON

Anne Rice's
The Tale of the
BODY THIEF



TALE
OF THE
**BODY
THIEF**

A GRAPHIC NOVEL

A GRAPHIC NOVEL

Adapted from the novel by
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THE VAMPIRE LESTAT HERE. I HAVE A STORY TO TELL YOU. IT'S ABOUT SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED TO ME.

IT BEGINS IN MIAMI, IN THE YEAR 1990, AND I REALLY WANT TO START RIGHT THERE. BUT IT'S IMPORTANT THAT I TELL YOU ABOUT THE DREAMS I'D BEEN HAVING BEFORE THAT TIME, ABOUT DREAMS OF A CHILD VAMPIRE WITH A WOMAN'S MIND AND AN ANGEL'S FACE, AND A DREAM OF MY MORTAL FRIEND DAVID TALBOT.

THERE WERE DREAMS ALSO OF MY MORTAL BOYHOOD IN FRANCE -- OF WINTER SNOWS, MY FATHER'S BLEAK AND RUINED CASTLE IN THE ALVERGNE, AND THE TIME I WENT OUT TO HUNT A PACK OF WOLVES THAT WERE PREYING UPON OUR POOR VILLAGE.

DREAMS CAN BE AS REAL AS EVENTS. OR SO IT SEEMED TO ME AFTERWARDS.

I WAS IN A DARK FRAME OF MIND WHEN THESE DREAMS BEGAN. I HAD BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A DARK GOD OF SORTS, THANKS TO SUFFERING AND TRIUMPH, AND TOO MUCH OF THE BLOOD OF OUR VAMPIRE ELDERS. I HAD POWERS WHICH LEFT ME BAFFLED AND SOMETIMES EVEN FRIGHTENED. I HAD POWERS WHICH MADE ME SORROWFUL THOUGH I DID NOT ALWAYS UNDERSTAND THE REASON FOR IT.

I WAS ALSO GRIEVING FOR THE OTHER IMMORTALS I HAD KNOWN AND LOVED, BECAUSE THEY HAD LONG AGO SCATTERED FROM OUR LAST GATHERING PLACE. FOLLY TO THINK WE WANTED TO CREATE A COVEN AGAIN. THEY HAD ONE BY ONE DISAPPEARED INTO TIME AND THE WORLD, WHICH WAS INEVITABLE.

VAMPIRES DON'T REALLY LIKE OTHERS OF THEIR KIND, THOUGH THEIR NEED FOR IMMORTAL COMPANIONS IS DESPERATE.

YOU'LL FIND PRECIOUS LITTLE HERE ABOUT THE OTHERS. INDEED, ALMOST NOTHING. THIS IS MY TALE, FROM START TO FINISH.

BUT LET ME SPEAK NOW OF THE DREAMS THAT HAD COME TO TROUBLE ME IN MY WANDERINGS.



WITH CLAUDIA, IT WAS
ALMOST A HAUNTING.



IT WAS 1794 WHEN I MADE THIS
SUCCULENT LITTLE VAMPIRE OUT
OF A DYING ORPHAN. AND SIXTY
YEARS PASSED BEFORE SHE
ROSE UP AGAINST ME, HER
KNIVES TEARING MY WHITE FLESH.

CLAUDIA SUFFERED FOR HER CRIME. AN EVIL COVEN
OF VAMPIRES IN PARIS SHUT HER OUT INTO THE
BRIGHT LIGHT OF DAY, WHICH BURNT HER TO ASHES.



JUST BEFORE
MY EYES WOULD
CLOSE EACH
DAWN, I'D SEE
HER BESIDE ME,
HEAR HER VOICE
IN A LOW AND
URGENT WHISPER.

AND SHE IS
SO PRETTY
IN THESE DREAMS.
WAS SHE THAT
PRETTY THEN?
OF COURSE
SHE WAS.

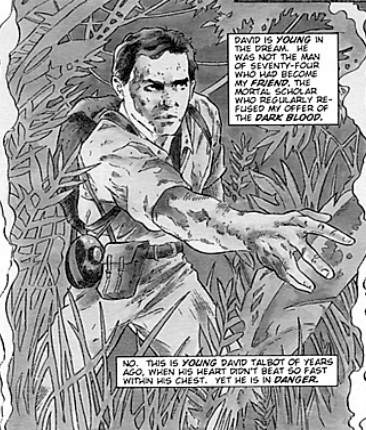


THE DREAM OF
DAVID TALBOT
CAME ONCE ONLY.

DAVID IS YOUNG IN
THE DREAM. HE
WAS NOT THE MAN
OF SEVENTY-FOUR
WHO HAD BECOME
MY FRIEND, THE
MORTAL SCHOLAR
WHO REGULARLY RE-
FUSED MY OFFER OF
THE DARK BLOOD.

TYGER, TYGER,
BURNING BRIGHT.

IS THAT HIS VOICE, WHISPERING
THOSE WORDS, OR IS IT MINE?



NO. THIS IS YOUNG DAVID TALBOT OF YEARS
AGO, WHEN HIS HEART DIDN'T BEAT SO FAST
WITHIN HIS CHEST. YET HE IS IN DANGER.



AND OUT OF THE DAPPLED LIGHT
IT COMES. DAVID, ITS FANGS!
CAN'T YOU SEE THESE FANGS?

DAVID, BEWARE!

CRACK!

WHY IS MY VOICE DRIED UP INSIDE
ME? AM I EVEN THERE IN THE
MANGROVE FOREST? GOOD GOD,
DAVID! THE FANGS!

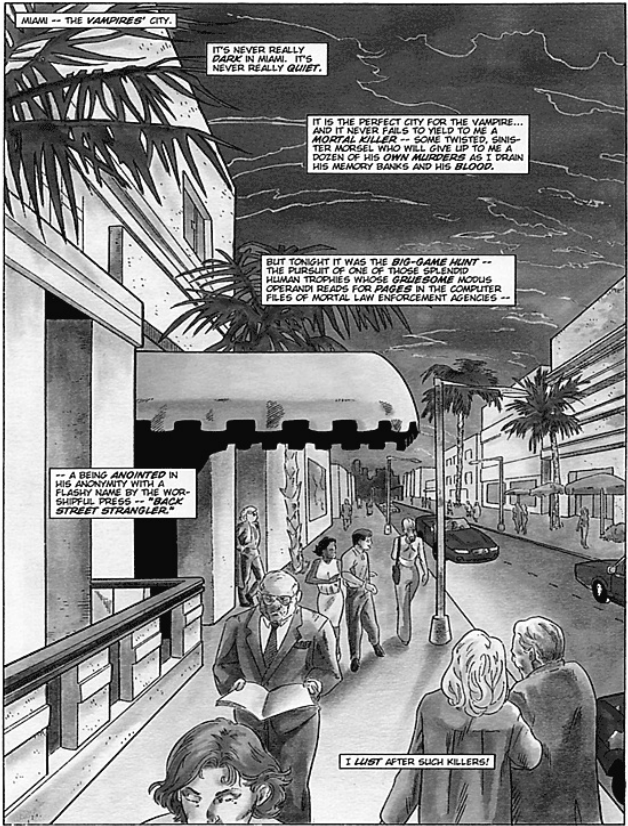
CRACK!

I WAKE.

WHAT DOES THIS DREAM MEAN -- THAT
MY MORTAL FRIEND IS IN DANGER? OR
SIMPLY THAT HIS GENETIC CLOCK HAS
TICKED TO A STOP?

DO I EVER THINK OF DAVID THAT
I DO NOT THINK OF DEATH?

ALL RIGHT, YOU HAVE THE DREAMS.
NOW WE ARE TRULY READY TO BEGIN.



MIAMI -- THE VAMPIRES' CITY.

IT'S NEVER REALLY
DARK IN MIAMI. IT'S
NEVER REALLY *QUIET*.

IT IS THE PERFECT CITY FOR THE VAMPIRE...
AND IT NEVER FAILS TO YIELD TO ME A
MORTAL KILLER -- SOME TWISTED, SINIS-
TER MORSEL WHO WILL GIVE UP TO ME A
DOZEN OF HIS *OWN MURDERS* AS I DRAIN
HIS MEMORY BANKS AND HIS *BLOOD*.

BUT TONIGHT IT WAS THE *BIG-GAME HUNT* --
THE PURSUIT OF ONE OF THOSE SPLENDID
HUMAN TROPHIES WHOSE *GRIEFSOME MOODS*
OPERANDI READS FOR *PAGES* IN THE COMPUTER
FILES OF MORTAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES --

-- A BEING ANOINTED IN
HIS ANONYMITY WITH A
FLASHY NAME BY THE WOR-
SHIPFUL PRESS -- "*BACK
STREET STRANGLER*."

I *LUST* AFTER SUCH KILLERS!



THROUGH HIS
BLOOD-SOAKED
DREAMS I'D
FOUND HIM. A
SIMPLE TRICK
FOR A DARK
GOD WHO CAN
READ MINDS.

AND TONIGHT THE PLEASURE
WILL BE MINE OF FINISHING
HIS ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER
IN A DARK, CRUEL EMBRACE.



AH, MIAMI. THE PERFECT PLACE
FOR THIS LITTLE PASSION PLAY.



LORD GOD, BUT HE WAS
FILTHY -- ALL DECENCY
LOST IN HIS MANIA.

HE WAS RACING, HIS
MIND SO THICK WITH
HALLUCINATIONS THAT
HE COULD SCARCE
CONTROL HIS SHUFF-
FLING, SLOPPY STEPS.



AND THEN IT HIT ME AS I
SCANNED HIS MIND ONCE
MORE -- HE DOESN'T KNOW
WHAT HE IS! HE HAS NEVER
READ HIS OWN HEADLINES!

HE DOES NOT TRULY
REMEMBER THE MURDERS
HE HAS COMMITTED, AND
HE DOES NOT KNOW THAT
HE WILL KILL TONIGHT!

HE DOES NOT KNOW
WHAT I KNOW!



I WANTED TO WEEP.
MY CONSCIENCE IS
KILLING ME, ISN'T IT?

AND WHEN YOU'RE IMMORTAL,
THAT CAN BE A REALLY LONG
AND IGNOMINIOUS DEATH.

THEN CAME THE PROVOCATIVE MOMENT. HE HAD SEEN THE OLD WOMAN.



PALLID, FEEBLE FACES FLASHED THROUGH HIS MIND AS HE TRAILED BEHIND HER.

HE HUNGRED TO LIE ON TOP OF OLD FLESH...HE HUNGRED TO PUT A HAND OVER AN OLD MOUTH.



MY VAGABOND KILLER WAS NEAR PARALYSIS AS HE WATCHED THE OLD WOMAN, HIS MIND A RIOT OF MOMENTS SO PERSONAL THEY DEFIED INTERPRETATION.



NOTHING WAS REAL TO HIM -- NOT HIS LIFE BY DAY, NOT FEAR OF DISCOVERY! --

-- ONLY THE ELECTRIC SHIVER WHICH HIS HALLUCINATIONS SENT THROUGH HIS HULKING TORSO AND CLUMSY ARMS AND LEGS.

I HATED THIS GUY! I DIDN'T WANT TO DRINK HIS BLOOD. HE WAS NO CLASSY KILLER.



IT WAS HER BLOOD I CRAVED.



...AND THE DOOR OPENED AND CLOSED AS IF I HAD TOUCHED IT, WHEN I HAD NOT.

I QUICKLY SLIPPED AROUND THE LITTLE STUGGO BUILDING AND FOUND THE STAIRS TO HER KITCHEN DOOR. THE LOCK GAVE EASILY WHEN I COMMANDED IT TO DO SO...



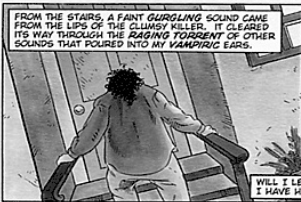
WHAT FILLED MY MIND AS I STOOD THERE, RIGID, WAS THAT SHE WAS UNAFRAID OF DEATH.

HOW THOUGHTFUL SHE WAS IN HER SOLITUDE AND SILENCE, HOW SMALL, HOW CONTENTED.



NOW, THAT'S BLOOD WORTH HAVING. AND I WAS STARVING AS IF I HAD SELDOM BEEN IN ALL THESE DECADES.

OH, LORD GOD, I WANTED SO TO KILL HER!



FROM THE STAIRS, A FAINT GURGLING SOUND CAME FROM THE LIPS OF THE CLUMSY KILLER. IT CLEARED ITS WAY THROUGH THE RAGING TORRENT OF OTHER SOUNDS THAT POURED INTO MY VAMPIRIC EARS.



WILL I LET HIM FRIGHTEN HER? IT SEEMED POINTLESS. I HAVE HIM IN MY SIGHTS, DO I NOT? STILL....

THEN THE CHAIN TORE LOOSE FROM THE ROTTEN WOOD, AND HE STEPPED INTO THE ROOM.



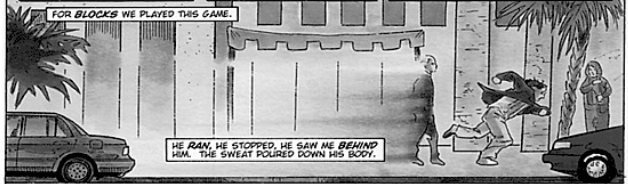
HE SAW ME --



AND THEN I WAS AFTER HIM, NOT BOTHERING TO TOUCH TERRA FIRMA.



FOR BLOCKS WE PLAYED THIS GAME.



HE RAN, HE STOPPED, HE SAW ME BEHIND HIM. THE SWEAT POURED DOWN HIS BODY.



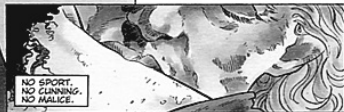
BEFORE HE COULD
CRY OUT, I HAD HIM.



HHMM. MY BROTHER, MY POOR BEFUDDLED
BROTHER. BUT THIS WAS RICH, THIS WAS GOOD.



THE FOUNTAIN OPENED. HIS LIFE WAS A SEWER.
ALL THOSE OLD WOMEN, THOSE OLD MEN.



NO SPORT.
NO CUNNING.
NO MALICE.

CRUDE AS A LIZARD HE HAD BEEN, SWALLOWING FLY AFTER FLY.



THE BLOOD FLOODED MY BRAIN. I FELT IT **ELECTRIFY** THE TINY VEINS OF MY FACE. I FELT A HOT PRICKLING **WARMTH** SLIDE DOWN MY SPINE.



DRAUGHT AFTER DRAUGHT FILLED ME. SUCCULENT, HEAVY CREATURE.



THE **DEATH** CAME LIKE A FIST IN THE GUT. I FELT THE HEAT, THE FULLNESS, THE **SHEER RADIANCE** OF THE LIVING BLOOD...

...WITH THAT LAST VIBRATION OF **CONSCIOUSNESS** PULSING THROUGH ALL MY LIMBS.

I SANK DOWN ON HIS SOILED BED. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I LAY THERE.

I DIDN'T WANT TO BE THE WEIGHTLESS ONE, THE WINGED ONE, THE **NIGHT TRAVELER**.



I WANTED TO BE **HUMAN**, AND **FEEL HUMAN**, AND HIS BLOOD WAS **THREADED** ALL THROUGH ME, AND IT WASN'T **ENOUGH**.

NOT NEARLY ENOUGH!





TAKE ME TO
HEAVEN.



I
CAN'T.
I WISH I
COULD.

JUST THE "LITTLE
DRINK," LESTAT,
NO MORE.



BUT IT WAS **TOO**
LATE AND I KNEW
IT WHEN THE FIRST
SPURT OF BLOOD
HIT MY TONGUE.

I WAS DRAINING HER.



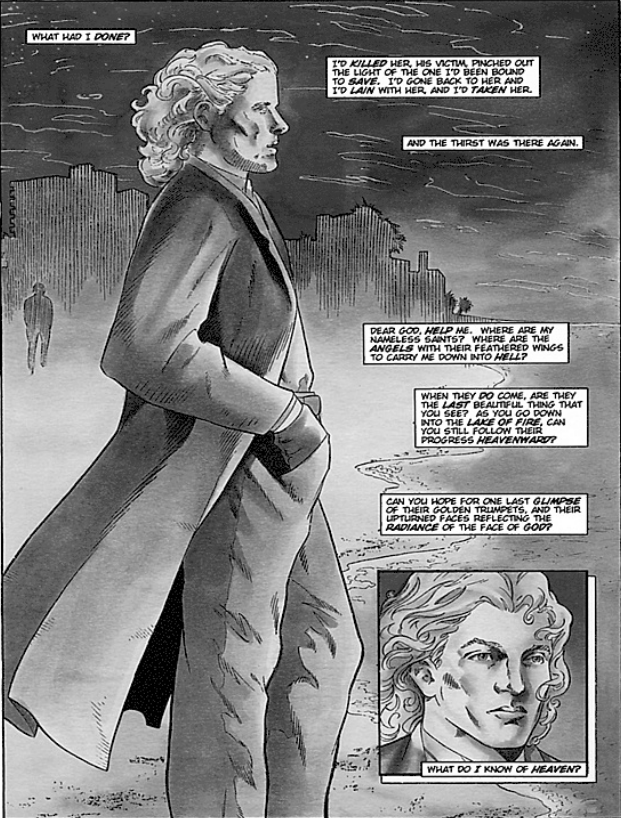
FORGIVE ME.

GOOD
NIGHT, MY
DARLING.



I LOVE YOU.

YES,
DARLING. I LOVE
YOU, TOO.

A man with curly hair, wearing a long dark coat, stands in profile looking out over a city at night. The city skyline is visible in the background with some lights and a few distant figures. The scene is dark and atmospheric.

WHAT HAD I DONE?

I'D KILLED HER, HIS VICTIM, PINCHED OUT
THE LIGHT OF THE ONE I'D BEEN BOUND
TO SAVE. I'D GONE BACK TO HER AND
I'D LAIN WITH HER, AND I'D TAKEN HER.

AND THE THIRST WAS THERE AGAIN.

DEAR GOD, HELP ME. WHERE ARE MY
NAMELESS SAINTS? WHERE ARE THE
ANGELS WITH THEIR FEATHERED WINGS
TO CARRY ME DOWN INTO HELL?

WHEN THEY DO COME, ARE THEY
THE LAST BEAUTIFUL THING THAT
YOU SEE? AS YOU GO DOWN
INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE, CAN
YOU STILL FOLLOW THEIR
PROGRESS HEAVENWARD?

CAN YOU HOPE FOR ONE LAST GLIMPSE
OF THEIR GOLDEN TRUMPETS, AND THEIR
UPTURNED FACES REFLECTING THE
RADIANCE OF THE FACE OF GOD?





A LONE MORTAL STOOD
IN THE DISTANCE, STARING
IN MY DIRECTION.



AND GRADUALLY I REALIZED THAT
OVER THE EMPTY SWEEP OF BEACH
AND ITS THIN DARKNESS, HIS EYES
WERE FIXED INTENTLY ON MINE.

YES, LOOKING AT ME.



I SCARCE THOUGHT ABOUT IT,
LOOKING AT HIM ONLY BECAUSE
I DID NOT BOTHER TO TURN AWAY.

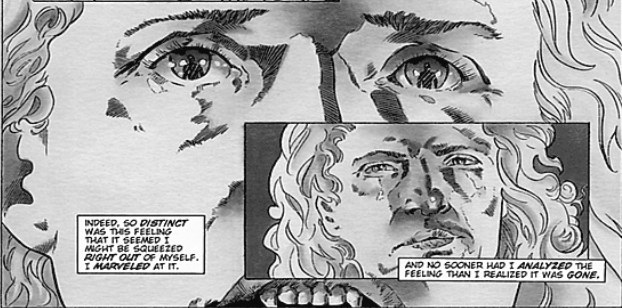


THEN A CURIOUS SENSATION PASSED OVER ME --
AND ONE WHICH I HAD NEVER FELT BEFORE.



I WAS FAINTLY DIZZY AS IT
BEGAN, AND A SOFT TINGLING
SENSATION FOLLOWED.

IT FELT AS IF MY LIMBS WERE GROWING
TIGHTER, NARROWER, AND STEADILY
COMPRESSING THE SUBSTANCE WITHIN.



INDEED, SO DISTINCT
WAS THIS FEELING
THAT IT SEEMED I
MIGHT BE SQUEEZED
RIGHT OUT OF MYSELF.
I MARVELED AT IT.

AND NO SOONER HAD I ANALYZED THE
FEELING THAN I REALIZED IT WAS GONE.



BAFFLING.

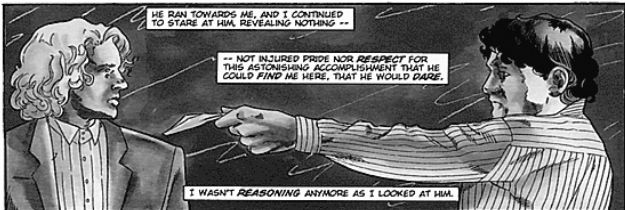
BUT I KNEW THIS MORTAL -- NO, MORE ACCURATE TO SAY I HAD GLIMPSED HIM MORE THAN ONCE.



IN VENICE, HOVERING ON THE EDGE OF THE PIAZZA SAN MARCO, AND LATER, IN HONG KONG, NEAR THE NIGHT MARKET --



-- AND BOTH TIMES I HAD TAKEN PARTICULAR NOTICE OF HIM BECAUSE HE HAD TAKEN PARTICULAR NOTICE OF ME.



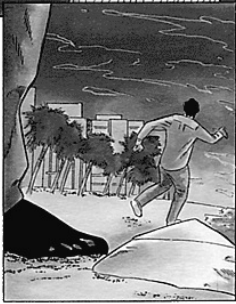
HE RAN TOWARDS ME, AND I CONTINUED TO STARE AT HIM, REVEALING NOTHING --

-- NOT INJURED PRIDE NOR RESPECT FOR THIS ASTONISHING ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT HE COULD FIND ME HERE, THAT HE WOULD DARE.

I WASN'T REASONING ANYMORE AS I LOOKED AT HIM.



I SAW ONLY BLOOD.





WHO WAS THIS
NERVY YOUNG
SON OF A BITCH?



HE'D KNOWN EXACTLY WHAT
I WAS, NO DOUBT OF IT.

VENICE AND HONG
KONG HAD NOT
BEEN COINCIDENCE.

OF ALL THINGS.

THE THING ON
THE DOORSTEP

by
H.P. LOVECRAFT

YES, I REMEMBERED THE
STORY. THAT IT WAS CLEVER.
THAT IT HAD BEEN FUN.

BUT WHY WOULD THIS
STRANGE MORTAL GIVE
SUCH A STORY TO ME?



OH, IF ONLY
HE HAD COME
TO TEMPT ME
ON SOME
OTHER NIGHT,
WHEN MY
SOUL WASN'T
SICK AND
WEARY --

-- WHEN I MIGHT HAVE CARED JUST A LITTLE.



WELL, THERE WAS STILL
TIME TO SAY FAREWELL
TO DAVID TALBOT, MY
MORTAL FRIEND.

I SOARED TOWARD ENGLAND,
THINKING OF MY LAST ENCOUNTER
WITH DAVID TALBOT. IT WAS IN
THE RIJCKSMUSEUM, IN AMSTERDAM.



ARE THERE
ANY VAMPIRES WHO
HAVE SUCH FACES AS THESE?
I AM SPEAKING OF THE KNOW-
LEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING
WHICH LIES BEHIND
THESE FACES.

I'M SPEAKING
OF SOMETHING MORE
INDICATIVE OF IMMORTALITY
THAN A PRETERNATURAL BODY
ANATOMICALLY DEPENDENT
UPON THE DRINKING OF
HUMAN BLOOD.

VAMPIRES
WITH SUCH FACES?
DAVID, THAT IS
UNFAIR.

THERE ARE
NO MEN WITH SUCH
FACES. THERE NEVER
WERE.





LOOK AT ANY OF REMBRANDT'S PAINTINGS. ABSURD TO BELIEVE THAT SUCH PEOPLE EVER EXISTED, LET ALONE THAT AMSTERDAM WAS FULL OF THEM IN REMBRANDT'S TIME --

-- THAT EVERY MAN OR WOMAN WHO EVER DARKENED HIS DOOR WAS AN ANGEL.

NO, IT'S REMBRANDT YOU SEE IN THESE FACES, AND REMBRANDT IS IMMORTAL, OF COURSE.

IT'S NOT TRUE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, AND WHAT A DESPERATE LONELINESS EMANATES FROM YOU.

DON'T YOU SEE I CAN'T ACCEPT YOUR GIFT, AND IF I DID, WHAT WOULD YOU THINK OF ME? WOULD YOU STILL CRAVE MY COMPANY?

WOULD I CRAVE YOURS?



I KNEW THAT I SHOULD NOT HAVE COME.

I LEFT SWIFTLY. HE WAS FURIOUS WITH ME FOR DOING IT.



UNFAIR OF YOU TO GO LIKE THAT! HAVE YOU NO HONOR? WHAT ABOUT MANNERS IF THERE IS NO HONOR LEFT?



I WROTE TO HIM HOURS LATER. I HAD TO TELL HIM THAT I WAS SORRY FOR MY BEHAVIOR --

-- AND THAT SOMETHING HAD SNAPPED IN MY SOUL WHEN I BEHELD THE MEN IN THE REMBRANDT PORTRAIT.



SO I TOLD HIM MY THEORY ABOUT REMBRANDT. THIS IS WHAT I WROTE:

I BELIEVE THAT REMBRANDT SOLD HIS SOUL TO THE DEVIL WHEN HE WAS A YOUNG MAN.



IT WAS A SIMPLE BARGAIN. THE DEVIL PROMISED TO MAKE REMBRANDT THE MOST FAMOUS PAINTER OF HIS TIME, AND HE WOULD HAVE REMBRANDT'S SOUL IN THE END.



BUT REMBRANDT HAD BEEN CHANGED BY HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE DEVIL. HE BEGAN TO SEARCH FOR THE FACES OF HIS SUBJECTS FOR THEIR INNER DIVINITY --



-- AND TO HIS AMAZEMENT FOUND THAT NOT ONLY COULD HE SEE THAT GOODNESS, HE COULD PAINT IT. HE COULD ALLOW HIS KNOWLEDGE OF IT, AND HIS FAITH IN IT, TO SUFUSE THE WHOLE.



THE FACES REMBRANDT PAINTED WERE NOT FLESH-AND-BLOOD FACES AT ALL. THEY WERE SPIRITUAL COUNTERPARTS...THEY WERE VISIONS OF WHAT THAT PERSON WAS AT HIS OR HER FINEST HOUR, OF WHAT THAT PERSON STOOD TO BECOME.



BUT NOWHERE IS THIS SPIRITUAL DEPTH AND INSIGHT MORE CLEARLY MANIFEST THAN IN REMBRANDT'S SELF-PORTRAITS. WHY DO YOU THINK HE PAINTED SO MANY?



THEY WERE HIS PERSONAL PLEA TO GOD TO NOTE THE PROGRESS OF THIS MAN, WHO HAD BEEN COMPLETELY RELIGIOUSLY TRANSFORMED.



FINALLY, WHEN HE LAY ON HIS DEATHBED AND THE DEVIL WAITED TO SNATCH HIS SOUL, THE ANGELS AND SAINTS CRIED TO GOD TO INTERVENE.



"IN ALL THE WORLD, WHO KNOWS MORE ABOUT GOODNESS?" THEY ASKED. "WHO HAS SHOWN MORE THAN THIS PAINTER? WE LOOK TO HIS PORTRAITS WHEN WE WOULD KNOW THE DIVINE IN MAN."

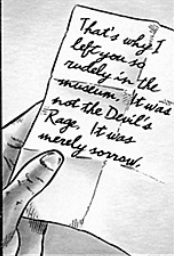


AND SO GOD BROKE THE PACT BETWEEN REMBRANDT AND THE DEVIL. HE TOOK TO HIMSELF THE SOUL OF REMBRANDT, AND THE DEVIL, SO RECENTLY CHEATED OF FAULTY FOR THE VERY SAME REASON, WENT MAD WITH RAGE.



THAT IS MY THEORY OF REMBRANDT AND THOSE FACES.

I LOVE THE PAINTINGS OF REMBRANDT!
YET IT BREAKS MY HEART TO LOOK AT
THEM... AND IT BROKE MY HEART TO SEE
YOU THERE IN THE MUSEUM... YOU ARE
PERFECTLY RIGHT THAT THERE ARE NO
VAMPIRES WITH FACES LIKE THE SAINTS
OF THE DRAPERS' GUILD.



*That's why I
left you so
ruddy in the
museum. It was
not the Devil's
Rage. It was
merely sorrow.*

DAVID HAD NEVER REPLIED.



AFTERWARDS, I WENT ON A PILGRIMAGE OF SORTS, REVISITING
THE PAINTINGS OF REMBRANDT IN THE GREAT COLLECTIONS OF
THE WORLD. I SAW NOTHING IN MY TRAVELS TO SWAY ME IN
MY BELIEF IN REMBRANDT'S GOODNESS.



I RESOLVED ANEW NEVER
TO BOTHER DAVID AGAIN.

BUT THEN I HAD THE DREAM.
TYGER, TYGER...DAVID IN DANGER....

NIGHT HAD ALMOST
ENDED IN ENGLAND.
I HAD TO HURRY.

I FOUND DAVID IN THE LIBRARY OF HIS MANOR HOUSE IN THE
COTSWOLDS, HIS FAMILIAR LEATHERBOUND DIARY IN HIS HAND.



IT COMFORTED ME MERELY TO WATCH
HIM, AS IT HAD ALWAYS DONE.





I'M GOING TO A DESERT PLACE. I'VE FIGURED A WAY TO END IT, I THINK.

THIS IS NOT A SIMPLE MATTER AT ALL.



WHY DO YOU WANT TO DO THAT?



DON'T WANT TO BE ALIVE ANYMORE. THAT PART OF IT IS SIMPLE ENOUGH.



I DON'T LOOK FORWARD TO DEATH THE WAY YOU DO. IT ISN'T THAT...

...TONIGHT, I --





DON'T
DO THIS,
LESTAT.

IT'S TIME,
DAVID. I CAME TO
SAY GOOD-BYE TO YOU.
TO ASK YOU IF YOU'RE
CERTAIN ABOUT YOUR
DECISION.



IT SEEMED
THE RIGHT THING TO
TELL YOU I WAS GOING.
AND THAT THIS WOULD
BE YOUR LAST
CHANCE.



LIKE MAGNUS
IN YOUR STORY, YOU'D
MAKE YOUR HAIR, THEN GO
INTO THE FIRE. BUT WHY DO
YOU WANT TO DESTROY
YOURSELF?



IT WASN'T
MERELY A STORY.
THAT WAS A MAN-
EATER, WASN'T
IT?

YES.

YOU KILLED
IT WHEN YOU WERE
VERY YOUNG, DIDN'T
YOU? IT WAS IN INDIA.
I SAW THE TIGER IN
A DREAM.



I DON'T
WANT YOU TO DO
IT. POSTPONE IT, FOR
THE LOVE OF HEAVEN.
DON'T DO IT.

WHY
TONIGHT, OF
ALL TIMES?



TONIGHT'S
A FINE NIGHT FOR
DOING IT. I THINK
I'VE FIGURED A
METHOD.

I'LL GO
AS HIGH AS I CAN
BEFORE THE SUN COMES
OVER THE HORIZON. THERE
WOULDN'T BE ANY WAY TO FIND
SHELTER. THE DESERT
THERE IS VERY
HARD.

AND I WILL DIE IN FIRE.



IN HEAT, AS CLAUDIA HAD DIED.



LESTAT, I DO NOT WANT THE BLOOD. BUT I WANT YOU TO STAY HERE. GIVE ME A MATTER OF A FEW NIGHTS ONLY.

LET ME TALK TO YOU, LET ME CHANGE YOUR MIND.





I WANTED TO SAY I WAS
SORRY, BUT IT WAS TOO
LATE NOW FOR THAT. AND
BESIDES, I THINK WE *KNEW*.

I SHOT UPWARDS
IN THE COLD DARK-
NESS. ALL LIFE
SEEMED LITTERLY
UNBEARABLE TO
ME, BOTH IN ITS
HORROR AND ITS
SPLENDOR.

I KNEW I WOULD
KEEP MY WORD.

BUT YOU KNOW THERE IS
A TERRIBLE LIE IN ALL
THIS. I DIDN'T REALLY BE-
LIEVE I *COULD* BE KILLED
BY THE SUN ANYMORE.

WELL, I WAS CERTAINLY GOING TO GIVE IT A GOOD TRY.



THE GOBI DESERT.

EONS AGO, GREAT LIZARDS
DIED IN THIS STRANGE PART OF
THE WORLD BY THE THOUSANDS.
NO ONE KNOWS WHY THEY CAME
HERE, WHY THEY PERISHED.

ALL WE HAVE NOW IN THIS SPOT IS THE *DESERT*
AND MILLIONS UPON MILLIONS OF *FOSSILS*.

THE GOBI DESERT.

AN IMMENSE GRAVEYARD...

...AND A FITTING
PLACE FOR ME TO
LOOK THE SUN IN
THE FACE.



THE TRICK WAS TO RISE TO THE VERY LIMIT OF THE ATMOSPHERE, INTO THE *SUNRISE*, SO TO SPEAK.



THEN WHEN I LOST CONSCIOUSNESS, I WOULD *TUMBLE DOWN* IN THE TERRIBLE HEAT, AND MY BODY WOULD BE *SHATTERED* BY THIS FALL UPON THE DESERT FLOOR.



IF THE BLAST OF LIGHT WAS *SUFFICIENTLY STRONG* TO BURN ME UP, NAKED AND SO HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH, PERHAPS I WOULD BE DEAD BEFORE MY REMAINS EVER *STRUCK* THE HARD BED OF SAND.



AS THE OLD EXPRESSION GOES...

...IT SEEMED LIKE A *GOOD IDEA* AT THE TIME.

I BEGAN THE ASCENT, MY
EYES ALREADY BURNING
FROM THE LIGHT.

HIGHER AND HIGHER
I WENT PROPELLING
MYSELF WELL BEYOND
THE PLACE WHERE MY
BODY TENDED TO STOP
AND BEGIN TO FLOAT
OF ITS OWN ACCORD.



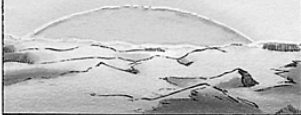
FINALLY I COULD NOT BREATHE, AS
THE AIR WAS VERY THIN, AND IT TOOK
A GREAT EFFORT TO SUPPORT MYSELF.

THEN THE LIGHT CAME.



SO IMMENSE, SO HOT,
SO BLINDING THAT IT
SEEMED A GREAT ROARING
NOISE AS MUCH AS A
VISION FILLING MY SIGHT.

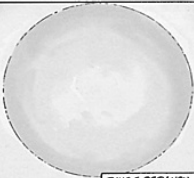
I SAW YELLOW AND ORANGE
FIRE COVERING EVERYTHING.



AND THEN THE LIGHT WAS COVERING ME
LIKE **MOLTEN LEAD**, PARALYZING ME AND
TORTURING ME BEYOND ENDURANCE,
AND MY OWN CRIES FILLED MY EARS.



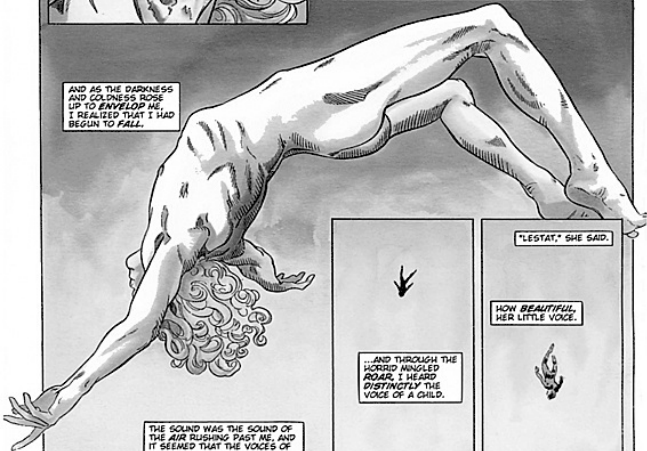
STILL I WOULD NOT LOOK AWAY, STILL I WOULD NOT FALL!



THUS I **DEFY** YOU, HEAVEN!

AND THEN THERE WERE NO WORDS SUDDENLY, AND
NO THOUGHTS. I WAS TWISTING, SWIMMING IN IT.

AND AS THE DARKNESS
AND COLDNESS ROSE
UP TO ENVELOP ME,
I REALIZED THAT I HAD
BEGUN TO FALL.



THE SOUND WAS THE SOUND OF
THE AIR RUSHING PAST ME, AND
IT SEEMED THAT THE VOICES OF
OTHERS WERE CALLING TO ME...



...AND THROUGH THE
HORRID MINGLED
ROAR, I HEARD
DISTINCTLY THE
VOICE OF A CHILD.

"LESTAT," SHE SAID.

HOW BEAUTIFUL,
HER LITTLE VOICE.



"NOT YET."



I FELT PAIN ALL OVER. PAIN EVEN IN THE
ROOTS OF MY HAIR. I FELT SUCH PAIN
I COULDN'T WILL MYSELF TO MOVE.

I WAS NOT GOING
TO DIE. I WAS
BURNT. YES. MY
SKIN WAS BROWN
AND WRINKLED AND
ROARING WITH PAIN.

BUT I WAS NOWHERE NEAR DEATH.



AND THEN I FELT THE SUN COMING AGAIN.

I WAS WEeping AS THE GREAT ORANGE
LIGHT SPILLED OVER ALL THE WORLD.

I THOUGHT MY HEAD WAS BURNING,
THAT IT WOULD EXPLODE, AND THAT
THE FIRE WAS EATING MY EYES.

I WAS MAD WHEN THE DARKNESS OF
OBLIVION CAME, ABSOLUTELY MAD.



WHEN I AWOKE THE FOLLOWING EVENING, I FELT SAND
IN MY MOUTH, SAND COVERING ME IN MY AGONY.

IN THAT MADNESS, I'D
APPARENTLY BURIED
MYSELF ALIVE.

FOR HOURS I REMAINED SO, THINKING
ONLY THAT THIS PAIN WAS MORE THAN
ANY CREATURE COULD ENDURE.

FINALLY I STRUGGLED TO
THE SURFACE, WHIMPERING
LIKE AN ANIMAL --

-- EACH GESTURE PULLING AT
THE PAIN AND INTENSIFYING IT.



I WILLED MYSELF INTO THE
AIR AND INTO THE NIGHT.

THE WIND WAS INFINITELY
SOFTER THAN THE SAND.
NEVERTHELESS, IT BROUGHT
ITS OWN TORMENT, LIKE
FINGERS STROKING MY
BURNT SKIN ALL OVER.

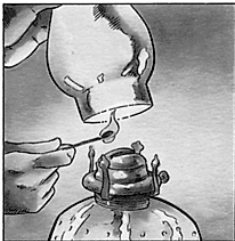
IT STUNG MY BURNT EYELIDS, AND
SCRAPED AT MY BURNT KNEES.

I TRAVELED GENTLY FOR
HOURS, WILLING MYSELF TO
DAVID TALBOT'S HOUSE.

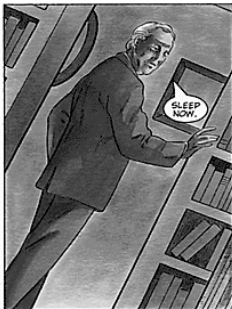




I STARTED
TO SLEEP.









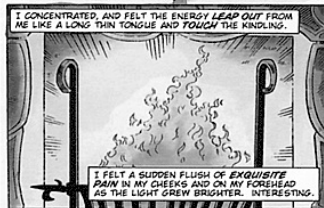
WHEN I WOKE
THE **SECOND**
NIGHT, THE PAIN
WAS NOT VERY
GREAT. MY BODY
WAS SORE ALL
OVER, PERHAPS
WHAT MORTALS
CALL RAW, BUT
THE AGONY WAS
CLEARLY PAST.



I WAS STILL LYING ON THE TIGER, AND THE ROOM
FELT JUST A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLY COLD.



I CONCENTRATED, AND FELT THE ENERGY LEAP OUT FROM
ME LIKE A LONG THIN TONGUE AND TOUCH THE KINDLING.



I FELT A SUDDEN FLUSH OF EXQUISITE
PAIN IN MY CHEEKS AND ON MY FOREHEAD
AS THE LIGHT GREW BRIGHTER. INTERESTING.



THERE WERE CLOTHES ON
THE CHAIR. I WANTED
TO BE DRESSED --

-- BUT WHAT I REALLY WANTED
NOW WAS A MIRROR.

I FOUND ONE IN THE HALLWAY.

YE GODS, HOW PERFECTLY WONDERFUL, I THOUGHT. YOU LOOK ALMOST LIKE A MAN.

ALMOST LIKE A MAN!

THERE'S NO MORE PAIN!

THERE IS SENSATION, BUT IT'S NOT EXACTLY WHAT WE CALL PAIN.

I'M GOING OUT FOR A LITTLE WHILE. OH, DON'T WORRY, I'LL BE BACK. I'M THIRSTING. I HAVE TO HUNT.

WELL, WHAT DID YOU THINK? THAT I'D GIVEN IT UP?

NO, OF COURSE NOT.

WELL, THEN -- CARE TO COME AND WATCH?







I HUNTED THE BACK STREETS OF LONDON.

ALL THE BLOOD IN THE WORLD
SEEMED *NOT ENOUGH* SUDDENLY.
TIME TO FEED, AGAIN AND AGAIN.

THEY WERE *DERELICTS*, ALL OF THEM,
LURED INTO THE *ICY DARKNESS* FROM
THEIR SHACKS OF TRASH AND CARDBOARD...

...AND *DOOMED*, OR SO I
TOLD MYSELF, *MOANING*
AND *FEASTING* AND THE
STENCH OF *RANCID SWEAT*,
AND URINE, AND *PHLEGM*.

BUT THE BLOOD WAS BLOOD.



THERE WAS AN OLD WOMAN, SHUFFLING ALONG
IN A SOILED COAT, HER FEET BOUND WITH RAGS,
MAD AND BITTER COLD SHE WAS, AND ALMOST
CERTAIN TO DIE BEFORE MORNING.

WE MADE GRAND LOVERS!

SHE HAD A NAME FOR ME AND A GREAT
WARM CLUSTER OF MEMORIES, AND
THERE WE WERE DANCING IN THE GUTTER
TOGETHER, SHE AND I, AND I HELD HER
A LONG TIME IN MY ARMS.

AND I DRANK SLOWLY, OH
SO SLOWLY, SAVORING IT,
AND FEELING A RUSH ALL
THROUGH MY BURNT SKIN.





SO WHY
AREN'T YOU AFRAID
OF DYING, DAVID? I DON'T
MEAN TO TORMENT YOU WITH
THE OLD OFFER. I HONESTLY
CAN'T QUITE FIGURE
IT OUT.

YOU'RE
REALLY, TRULY
NOT AFRAID TO DIE, AND
THAT I SIMPLY DO NOT
UNDERSTAND. BECAUSE
YOU CAN DIE, OF
COURSE.

HE DIDN'T ANSWER
IMMEDIATELY. WAS
HE HAVING DOUBTS?



I HAVE
WRECKED THINGS FOR
YOU, HAVEN'T I? I KNEW IT
IN AMSTERDAM. YOU DON'T
STAY IN THE TALAMASCA
MOTHERHOUSE UNLESS
YOU HAVE TO.

I'M
NOT DRIVING YOU
HARD, BUT I'VE HAD A
VERY BAD EFFECT,
HAVE I NOT?

WOULD
HAVE HAPPENED
ANYWAY,
LESTAT.



YOU KNOW
WHY I BECAME A
MEMBER OF THE TALAMASCA?
IT STARTED WITH ANOTHER
HUNTING EXPEDITION,
A TRIP TO FAR-OFF
BRAZIL.

THAT'S
WHERE I DISCOVERED
THE OCCULT, YOU MIGHT
SAY, IN THE CROOKED
STREETS OF OLD
RIO.



TELL
ME THIS STORY.
WHAT HAPPENED
IN RIO?





THEY PUM-
MELED ME IN THE
DARKNESS! THEY PICKED
UP THE BED AND DUMPED
ME OUT! THEY NEARLY
SCALDED ME IN THE
SHOWER!

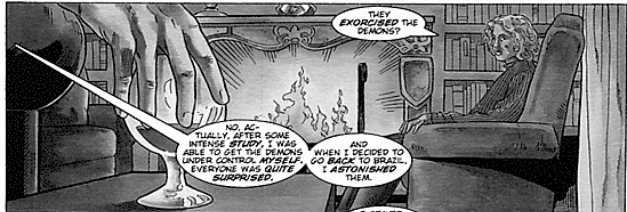
AFTER A
FULL SEVEN DAYS, I
THOUGHT I WAS GOING
OUT OF MY MIND. I'D GONE
FROM ANNOYANCE AND
INCREDULITY TO SHEER
TERROR.



CARLOS
FINALLY CONFESSED
EVERYTHING. HIS MOTHER
DON'T INTEND TO REMOVE THE
CURSE UNTIL I LEFT. WELL,
I LEFT THAT VERY
NIGHT.

I CAME
BACK TO LONDON,
EXHAUSTED AND HALF
MAD, BUT IT DIDN'T DO ANY
GOOD. THE SPIRITS
CAME WITH ME.

IT WAS MY
MOTHER WHO ACTUALLY
BROUGHT IN THE
TALAMASCA.



THEY
EXORCISED THE
DEMONS?

NO, AC-
TUALY, AFTER SOME
INTENSE STUDY, I WAS
ABLE TO GET THE DEMONS
UNDER CONTROL MYSELF.
EVERYONE WAS QUITE
SURPRISED.

AND
WHEN I DECIDED TO
GO BACK TO BRAZIL,
I ASTONISHED
THEM.



YOU
CONFRONTED
THE WOMAN?

CONFRONTED
HER AND IMPRESSED
HER. I TOLD HER I
WANTED TO BECOME HER
APPRENTICE.



I STAYED
A YEAR IN RIO.
THAT WAS THE MOST
REMARKABLE YEAR
OF MY LIFE.

I ONLY
LEFT RIO FINALLY
BECAUSE I KNEW IF I
DIDN'T, I NEVER
WOULD.



"HAPPENED IN PARIS RIGHT BEFORE THE WAR. I WAS IN A CAFE ON THE LEFT BANK, AND IT WAS A LOVELY SPRING DAY, A SIMPLY GRAND TIME TO BE IN PARIS.

"I WAS DRINKING A BEER, READING THE ENGLISH PAPER -- AND I REALIZED I WAS OVERHEARING A CONVERSATION.

"IT WASN'T IN ENGLISH AND IT WASN'T IN FRENCH...AND GRADUALLY I CAME TO KNOW THAT IT WASN'T IN ANY LANGUAGE, REALLY, AND YET IT WAS FULLY UNDERSTANDABLE TO ME.

"-- AND I KNEW I'D JUST TURNED AND LOOKED AT TWO INDIVIDUALS WHO WEREN'T HUMAN BEINGS."

"ON AND ON IT WENT. IT WAS A SORT OF ARGUMENT, AND I WASN'T SURE ANYONE ELSE IN THE CAFE COULD ACTUALLY HEAR THIS!

"I TURNED AND LOOKED --



"IT WAS GOD
TALKING TO
THE DEVIL AND
TELLING THE
DEVIL THAT
HE *MUST* GO
ON DOING THE
JOB, AND THE
DEVIL DIDN'T
WANT TO DO IT.



"THE DEVIL EXPLAINED
THAT HIS TERM HAD
ALREADY BEEN TOO
LONG. THE SAME THING
WAS HAPPENING TO HIM
THAT HAD HAPPENED
TO ALL THE OTHERS.



"GOD SAID THAT HE
UNDERSTOOD, BUT
THE DEVIL OUGHT TO
KNOW HOW IMPOR-
TANT HE WAS. HE
COULDN'T SHRINK HIS
DUTIES, GOD NEEDED
HIM, AND NEEDED
HIM TO BE *STRONG*.



"AND ALL THIS WAS
VERY AMICABLE."



WHEN I
TRIED TO RECON-
STRUCT THIS EVENTS
AFTERWARDS, I
COULDN'T RECALL ANY
DETAILS! I DON'T
THINK THE ILLUSION
WAS THAT NEARLY
COMPLETE.

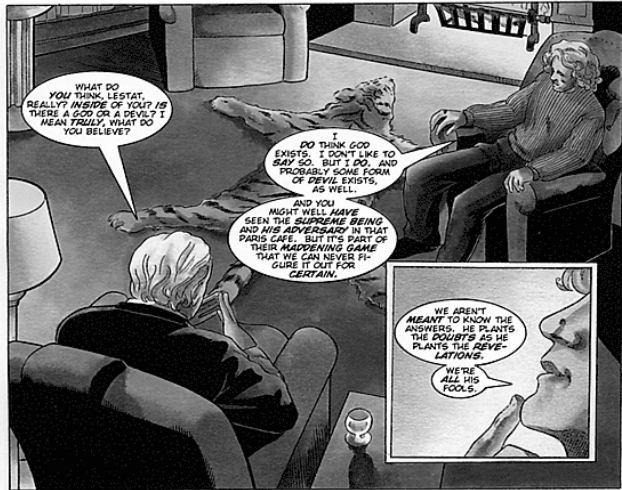


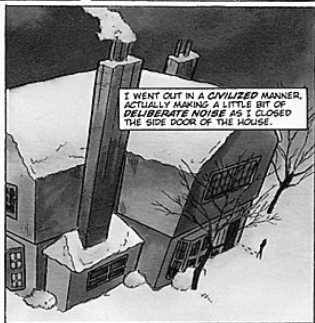
THEY
NEVER *SAW* YOU.
NEVER KNEW YOU
WERE *THERE?*



MY DEAR BOY,
THEY *HAD* TO KNOW I
WAS THERE. THEY *MUST*
HAVE KNOWN. THEY *MUST*
HAVE BEEN DOING IT FOR
MY *BENEFIT!*

HOW
ELSE COULD I HAVE
BEEN ALLOWED TO
SEE IT?





IT WAS CLOSE TO DAWN WHEN I REACHED LONDON. AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY A NIGHT, I WAS ACTUALLY GLAD OF MY IMMENSE POWERS.

I NEEDED NO COFFINS, NO DARK HIDING PLACES, MERELY A ROOM COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM THE RAYS OF THE SUN.

I WAS READY TO SETTLE IN WITH DAVID'S BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE WHEN I SUDDENLY EXPERIENCED A BOLT OF DIZZINESS.

IT WAS VERY PLEASURABLE, ACTUALLY, THE SUBTLE VIBRATORY SENSATION, ACCOMPANIED BY A WEIGHTLESSNESS...

...THEN CAME THAT PRESSURE AGAIN WHICH I'D FELT SO FLEETINGLY IN MIAMI -- OF MY LIMBS CONSTRICTING, OF MY WHOLE FORM PRESSING INWARDS UPON ME.

WHY WAS THIS HAPPENING?

KNOCK
KNOCK

A MESSAGE FOR YOU, SIR, THE GENTLEMAN REQUESTED I PUT IT IN YOUR HANDS.



OH, BUT THIS IS NOT **POSSIBLE**....



EYES OF THE MUMMY

BY
ROBERT BLOCH

I WAS IN A FURY. A POSITIVE
FURY. I'M GOING TO **KILL** THIS
SON OF A BITCH, I THOUGHT,
WHOEVER THE HELL HE IS.

HOW DARE HE COME STALKING ME AND
SHOWING THESE **STORIES** IN MY FACE!



YES -- I
WILL **KILL** HIM AS
SOON AS I CATCH
HIM!

I WASN'T SO ANGRY WITH THE
LITTLE MORTAL FIEND -- WHO
HAD FOUND ME AGAIN, IN
LONDON -- WHEN I WOKE UP.



ACTUALLY, I WAS POWERFULLY INTRIGUED.

I DECIDED UPON A LITTLE
EXPERIMENT. I WENT
TO PARIS, MAKING THE
CROSSING VERY QUICKLY
AND ON MY OWN.

I DIDN'T TELL A SOUL, MORTAL OR IMMORTAL, THAT I WAS THERE.

I HEADED FOR THE SNOW-COVERED PLACE
VENDÔME, WHICH CONTAINED THE VERY
SAME PALACES WHICH IT HAD IN ANY DAY...

...AND UNDER THE ALIAS OF BARON
VAN KINDERGARTEN, ENSCONCED
MYSELF IN A LAVISH SUITE AT THE RITZ.

FOR TWO NIGHTS I AVOIDED THE
CITY, AND SET AT ONCE TO READING
DAVID TALBOT'S MANUSCRIPTS.

A black and white comic book page. The background is a dense jungle with large leaves and vines. In the upper half, a man with dark, wavy hair and a light-colored button-down shirt is shown from the chest up. He has a serious, intense expression and is looking directly at the viewer. His hands are positioned as if he is reaching out or gesturing. In the lower half, a woman with blonde, wavy hair is sitting up in a bed. She is wearing a light-colored robe and is looking down at an open book she is holding in her lap. The bed has a dark, ornate headboard and is covered with a white sheet. The overall tone is mysterious and dramatic.

DAVID'S WRITING CAPTIVATED ME. I SOON FELT CLOSER TO HIM THAN EVER BEFORE.

THE GIST WAS THAT THE DEEP TELEPATHIC POWERS OF DAVID'S BRAIN HAD BEEN DEVELOPED THROUGH A SERIES OF PRIMITIVE AND TERRIFYING ENCOUNTERS WITH BRAZILIAN PRIESTESSES, AND SPIRITS, AS WELL.

AND THE BODY OF DAVID HAD BECOME A MERE INSTRUMENT FOR THIS PSYCHIC POWER, THEREBY PAVING THE WAY FOR THE SCHOLAR WHO HAD EMERGED IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED.

AND OF COURSE, THIS DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE OF HIM MADE ME ACHE FOR HIM ALL THE MORE.

THESE MANUSCRIPTS MORE FULLY ILLUMINATED ANOTHER POINT FOR ME, AS WELL. DAVID WAS THE VERY MAN TO REFUSE THE DARK GIFT, AND TO THE BITTER END.

THIS MAN FEARED NOTHING, REALLY. HE DIDN'T LIKE DEATH, BUT HE DIDN'T FEAR IT. HE NEVER HAD.

BUT I HAD NOT COME TO PARIS TO READ THIS MEMOIR.

I HAD ANOTHER PURPOSE IN MIND.



I HAD BEEN **STRENGTHENED** BY MY ORdeal
IN THE DESERT, THAT WAS PLAIN. AND I WAS
READY FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN...

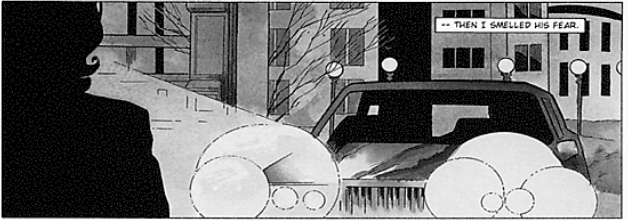
...AND FINALLY, IN THE EARLY
HOURS OF THE MORNING, WHEN I
HAD BECOME A BIT MELANCHOLY
AND WAS GRIEVING A LITTLE
FOR THE OLD TUMBLEDOWN
BUILDINGS OF THE 1700s --

-- AND I WAS LEANING ON THE HIGH STONE LEDGE OF THE
BANK VERY NEAR THE BRIDGE TO THE ILE DE LA CITE --

-- I SAW MY MAN.

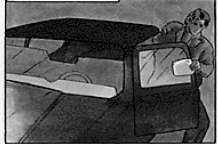


FIRST CAME THAT SENSATION, SOFT,
DELICIOUS RIPPLES OF VIBRATION --



-- THEN I SMELLED HIS FEAR.

FINALLY HE SCREWED
UP HIS *COURAGE*.



DON'T BE
HASTY, MONSIEUR
DE LIONCOURT!



WHO THE
HELL ARE
YOU?





I WASN'T SURE I SHOULD HAVE LET HIM GO, BUT I WAS SOMEHOW ENJOYING THIS LITTLE GAME...

...EVEN ENJOYING MY OWN INDIGNATION AT HIS CLEVERNESS AND CAPACITY FOR TRACKING ME.



WHAT ON EARTH?

A VIDEOTAPE OF A FILM, A COMEDY. VICE VERSA WAS THE TITLE.



I RETURNED TO THE HOTEL. THERE WAS YET ANOTHER PACKAGE WAITING FOR ME.

I DECIDED TO RING DAVID, THOUGH IT WAS NOW VERY NEAR DAWN.

DAVID, WOULD YOU COME TO PARIS? I'LL HAVE EVERYTHING ARRANGED FOR YOU.

SEE YOU AT DINNER, EIGHT O'CLOCK TOMORROW, IN THE DINING ROOM, DOWNSTAIRS.

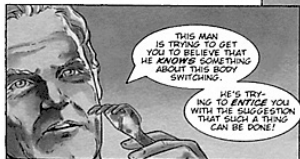






AND THE FILMS --
THEY'RE ABOUT
BODY SWITCHING
AS WELL.

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT!
ALL FOUR STORIES
ARE ABOUT THE
SAME THING!



THIS MAN
IS TRYING TO GET
YOU TO BELIEVE THAT
HE KNOWS SOMETHING
ABOUT THIS BODY
SWITCHING.

HE'S TRY-
ING TO ENTICE YOU
WITH THE SUGGESTION
THAT SUCH A THING
CAN BE DONE!



CALM
YOURSELF, LESTAT.
THINK THIS THROUGH.
PERHAPS SUCH A SWITCH
COULD BE ACHIEVED
FOR A FEW MIN-
UTES.

BUT ANCHOR-
ING IN A NEW BODY,
REMAINING INSIDE IT,
FUNCTIONING DAY IN
AND DAY OUT?

NO.

YOU CAN'T
EXPERIMENT WITH
THIS. WHAT IF IT
WORKED?



DAVID,
HE CAN DO IT. HE
CAN SWITCH BODIES
WITH PEOPLE!

THAT'S
WHY HE ALMOST
FALLS WHEN HE RUNS
-- GOOD GOD! THAT
MAN IS IN SOMEONE
ELSE'S BODY!

AND I'LL
TELL YOU SOMETHING
ELSE. HE'S ALREADY TRIED
THIS SWITCHING TRICK WITH
ME AND IT'S FAILED. THE
SENSATION WAS SO
STRONG!

OH, DON'T
YOU SEE? HE'S
SUGGESTING THAT HE CAN
SWITCH WITH ME! HE'S
OFFERING ME THAT HAND-
SOME YOUNG MORTAL
FRAME!



DAVID...
I COULD BE
A MORTAL
MAN.



LESTAT,
YOU CAN'T PURSUE
THIS! HE'S SPEAKING OF
TRADING HERE -- YOU CAN'T
LET HIM HAVE YOUR BODY IN
RETURN! YOU INSIDE THAT
BODY IS QUITE
ENOUGH!

FIRST
OFF, WHERE DID HE
GET THAT BODY? WHAT
IF HE DID, IN FACT,
STEAL IT?

THIS
IS A SINISTER
BEING. YOU CAN'T
DELIVER TO HIM A BODY
AS POWERFUL AS
YOUR OWN!



I HEARD ALL THIS,
UNDERSTOOD IT, BUT
COULDN'T ABSORB IT.

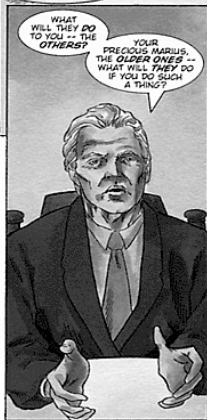
DAVID,
I COULD BE
A MORTAL
MAN.



LESTAT,
I'M BEGGING YOU.
DON'T EXPLORE THIS ANY
FURTHER. YOU'RE GOING TO
MAKE ANOTHER GASTLY
MISTAKE!

CALM DOWN,
DAVID, PLEASE. YOU
GO ON BACK TO LONDON,
AND I'M GOING TO FIND THIS
LITTLE BASTARD. I'M GOING
TO HEAR WHAT HE HAS
TO SAY.

DON'T
WORRY! I WON'T
PROCEED WITHOUT
CONSULTING
YOU.



I SEARCHED FOR HOURS, BUT I COULDN'T FIND THE LITTLE FIEND, IF HE WAS STILL IN PARIS, HE WAS CLOAKED SO THAT I COULDN'T PICK UP THE FAINTEST SHIMMER OF HIS PRESENCE.

AT LAST I RETURNED TO THE HOTEL, TO PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY HOME.

AND LOUIS -- I HAD TO LAY IT ALL BEFORE LOUIS. HE WOULD UNDERSTAND THE LURE. OH, YES, HE WOULD.

I KNEW THE MINUTE I SAW IT THAT IT WAS A NOTE FROM HIM.

Don't be hasty. And don't listen to your fool friend from the Talamasca, either. I shall see you in New Orleans tomorrow night. Don't disappoint me. Jackson Square. We shall then make an appointment to work a little alchemy of our own. I think you understand now what's at stake.

Yours sincerely,
Raglan James

RAGLAN JAMES.

RAGLAN JAMES. I DIDN'T LIKE THE NAME. THE NAME WAS LIKE HIM.

I WENT OFF TO UNDERTAKE THE LONG JOURNEY HOME.

NEW ORLEANS.

I ARRIVED QUITE EARLY IN THE EVENING, FOR I HAD GONE BACKWARDS IN TIME AGAINST THE TURNING OF THE WORLD.

IN A STRETCH OF SOFT LEAFY DARKNESS, BEYOND A GREAT ROW OF HUGE MAGNOLIA TREES, LOUIS MADE HIS SECRET HOME.

FOR A LONG MOMENT, I SPIED UPON HIM.

I LOVED TO DO THIS.





IT'S
NOTHING, IT'S
FINISHED. I WENT INTO A
DESERT PLACE. I WANTED
TO SEE WHAT WOULD
HAPPEN --

YOU
WANTED TO
SEE WHAT WOULD
HAPPEN?



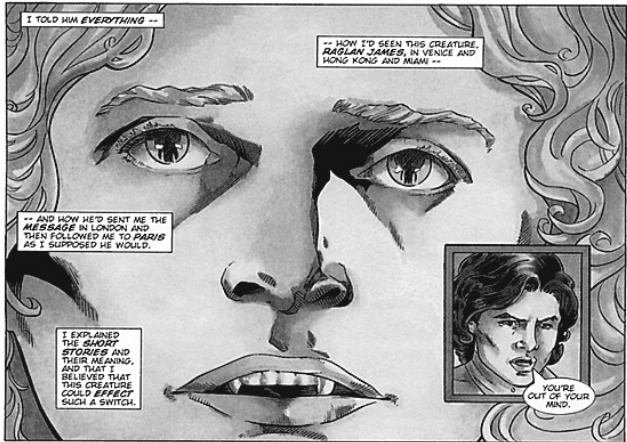
YOU
MEANT TO DESTROY
YOURSELF, DIDN'T
YOU?

WHY
DID YOU DO
IT?



LOUIS, I HAVE
SOMETHING MORE
IMPORTANT TO TELL
YOU. FORGET ABOUT
ALL THIS.

SOMETHING
VERY REMARKABLE
HAS HAPPENED, AND I
HAVE TO TELL YOU THE
WHOLE TALE.



I TOLD HIM EVERYTHING --

-- HOW I'D SEEN THIS CREATURE,
RAGLAN JAMES, IN VENICE AND
HONG KONG AND MIAMI --

-- AND HOW WE'D SENT ME THE
MESSAGE IN LONDON AND
THEN FOLLOWED ME TO PARIS
AS I SUPPOSED HE WOULD.

I EXPLAINED
THE SHORT
STORIES AND
THEIR MEANING,
AND THAT I
BELIEVED THAT
THIS CREATURE
COULD EFFECT
SUCH A SWITCH.

YOU'RE
OUT OF YOUR
MIND.



YOU WERE BORN A MONSTER, AND YOU KNOW IT. HOW THE HELL CAN YOU DELUDE YOURSELF LIKE THIS?





LESTAT,
KILL THIS CREATURE!
YOU'RE MAD IF YOU LET
HIM COME CLOSE ENOUGH TO
YOU TO SPEAK THREE
WORDS!

I NEVER
EXPECTED THIS FROM
YOU. I EXPECTED SOME LONG
PHILOSOPHICAL DIATRIBE,
LIKE THE TRASH YOU WROTE
IN YOUR MEMOIR, BUT
THIS?

YOU
DON'T REALLY
WANT TO BE HUMAN.
YOU DON'T BELIEVE
THAT, DO YOU?



YES,
I BELIEVE IT!
HOW COULD YOU
NOT BELIEVE
IT?



YOU'RE
ALWAYS LOOKING
FOR A WAY TO TRIUMPH.
YOU NEVER GIVE IN, BUT
THERE IS NO WAY TO
TRIUMPH.

THIS IS
PURGATORY WE'RE
IN, YOU AND I. ALL WE
CAN BE IS THANKFUL THAT
IT ISN'T ACTUALLY
HELL.



I DON'T
WANT TO HEAR
ANY MORE! YOU'LL SING
THE SONG OF LIMITATION'S
ALL YOUR LONG DREARY
YEARS ON THIS EARTH,
WON'T YOU?

WELL, I
CAN'T QUASH MY
CURIOSITY OR MY SPIRIT.
I WANT TO KNOW IF THIS
MAN CAN REALLY DO IT. I
WANT TO KNOW WHAT
WILL HAPPEN.

AND I
WON'T GIVE
IN.





I'M GOING TO PURSUE THIS, YOU KNOW.

ALL RIGHT, BUT LET ME WARN YOU -- IF I SEE HIM, IF HE THREATENS ME, I SHALL KILL HIM.

I HAVEN'T YOUR STRENGTH, I DEPEND UPON MY ANONYMITY.



I WON'T LET HIM HARM YOU, LOUIS.

I WOULD NEVER EVER HAVE LET ANYONE HARM YOU.

OF COURSE, THIS WAS AN ACCUSATION, AND HE FELT THE KEEN EDGE OF IT -- I'D SEEN THAT BEFORE I TURNED AND WENT OUT.

THE NIGHT CLAUDIA ROSE UP AGAINST ME, HE HAD STOOD THERE, ABHORRING BUT NOT THINKING TO INTERFERE, EVEN AS I CALLED HIS NAME.

HE HAD TAKEN WHAT HE THOUGHT TO BE MY LIFELESS BODY AND DUMPED IT IN THE SWAMP. AH, NAIVE LITTLE FLEDGLINGS, TO THINK YOU COULD SO EASILY GET RID OF ME.

HE HAD GRIEVED FOR ME, I'LL GIVE HIM THAT MUCH. BUT THEN, HE IS SO GOOD AT GRIEVING!

HE WEARS GRIEF AS OTHERS WEAR VELVET. SORROW FLATTERS HIM LIKE THE LIGHT OF CANDLES, TEARS BECOME HIM LIKE JEWELS.

WELL, NONE OF THAT TRASH WORKS WITH ME.

SOMETHING DREADFUL'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU AGAIN, LESTAT.

YOU'RE GOING TO SEE TO IT.

THE NEXT NIGHT, I
WENT AT ONCE TO
JACKSON SQUARE.

A TERRIBLE NORTHER HAD COME DOWN INTO NEW ORLEANS,
BRINGING WITH IT A FREEZING WIND. I'D STOPPED AT MY
ROOFTOP FLAT TO PUT ON A COAT, DELIGHTED THAT I HAD
SUCH FEELING NOW IN MY NEWLY BRONZED SKIN.

I SAW HIM
IMMEDIATELY.
WHAT LUCK.

AH, BUT
YOU DO LOOK LIKE
AN ANGEL, MONSIEUR
DE LONGCOURT. AND HOW
BLENDED YOUR DARKENED
SKIN. WHAT A LOVELY
ENHANCEMENT.

SO
YOU'RE HERE,
MISTER JAMES. WHAT'S
THE PROPOSITION? I
DON'T LIKE YOU.
TALK FAST.

DON'T BE
RUDE, MONSIEUR
DE LONGCOURT. IT WOULD
BE A DREADFUL MISTAKE
TO OFFEND ME, REALLY
IT WOULD.

IF YOU DON'T
TELL ME HOW YOU'VE
MANAGED TO FOLLOW
ME AND WHAT YOU
WANT --

-- I'M
GOING TO KILL
YOU.









TEN MILLION. THAT'S QUITE A PRICE.

FOR WHAT I OFFER, TEN MILLION IS A BARGAIN. WHO ELSE CAN MAKE YOU SUCH AN OFFER?

AND SUPPOSE I DON'T WANT TO SWITCH BACK AT THE END OF THE WEEK? SUPPOSE I WANT TO BE HUMAN FOR-
EVER.

THAT'S PERFECTLY FINE WITH ME. I CAN GET RID OF YOUR BODY ANYTIME I WANT. THERE ARE LOTS OF OTHERS WHO'LL TAKE IT OFF MY HANDS.



WHAT'S YOUR GAME? I MEAN REALLY. WHAT'S YOUR PASSION? IT CAN'T BE THE MONEY.



IF YOU MUST KNOW THE TRUTH, I'M A THIEF IN EVERY RESPECT. I DON'T ENJOY SOMETHING UNLESS I BARGAIN FOR IT, TRICK SOMEONE OUT OF IT, OR STEAL IT.

EVERYTHING IN MY HOUSE IN GEORGETOWN IS STOLEN -- EVERY PIECE OF FURNITURE, EVERY PAINTING, EVERY OBJET D'ART. EVEN THE HOUSE IS STOLEN, IN A WAY -- I BELIEVE THEY CALL IT SWINDLING?

ALL THE MONEY I POSSESS IS STOLEN. SO IS THE CAR I DRIVE. SO ARE THE AIRLINE TICKETS I USED TO CHASE YOU AROUND THE WORLD.



HOW DID YOU ACCOMPLISH THAT, FOLLOWING ME ABOUT? HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE I WAS?

TWO WAYS. TO BE PERFECTLY FRANK, THE FIRST IS OBVIOUS.

I CAN LEAVE MY BODY FOR SHORT PERIODS, AND DURING THOSE PERIODS I CAN SEARCH FOR YOU OVER VAST DISTANCES.

THEN THERE'S ANOTHER WAY, ALMOST AS MAGICAL -- COMPUTER SYSTEMS. THERE'S NOTHING TO CHASING PEOPLE THROUGH COMPUTER SYSTEMS.



DO YOU STEAL THROUGH THE COMPUTER SYSTEMS, AS WELL?

WHEN I CAN.

I WANT YOU TO LEAVE HERE NOW. GET OUT OF THIS CITY AND NEVER COME BACK. GIVE ME YOUR ADDRESS IN GEORGETOWN AND I'LL COME TO YOU WHEN I'M READY.

AND IT WON'T BE FOR A WEEK. THIS SWITCH. NOT THE FIRST TIME, AT ANY RATE.



WHAT IF WE START WITH ONE DAY? IF YOU LIKE IT, THEN WE CAN ARRANGE FOR A LONGER TIME?

ONE DAY. ONE PERIOD OF TWENTY FOUR HOURS...FOR THE FIRST TIME.



ONE DAY
AND TWO NIGHTS.
LET ME SUGGEST THIS
WEDNESDAY, SOON AFTER
SUNSET. WE CAN MAKE THE
SECOND SWITCH FRIDAY,
BEFORE DAWN.

OH, AND
BRING ONE OF YOUR
PASSPORTS WITH YOU, AND
SOME MONEY. I WILL HAVE
A PASSPORT READY FOR
YOU, AS WELL.



YOU
KNOW THIS WILL
WORK. COME TO ME
WEDNESDAY. YOU'LL BE
VERY GLAD THAT
YOU DID.



THIS IS
SOMETHING ONLY
YOU AND I CAN DO. IN A
WAY, IT IS A MIRACLE WHICH
ONLY YOU AND I CAN
UNDERSTAND.



ALL
RIGHT.

I THINK
YOU'LL SEE ME ON
WEDNESDAY.





YOU ARE
A THIEF *PAR EXCEL-
LENCE*. EVERY BREATH YOU
TAKE IS STOLEN! OH, YES, I
MUST HAVE YOUR BODY. I
MUST EXPERIENCE
THIS.

TO
POSSESS YOUR
BODY, AND TO STEAL
BLOOD WHILEST IN IT! AH,
THAT IS BEYOND ALL MY
FINEST ACCOMPLISH-
MENTS!

YOU
ARE THE ULTIMATE
THIEF, MONSIEUR DE
L'ONGOURT!

GET
AWAY FROM
ME.



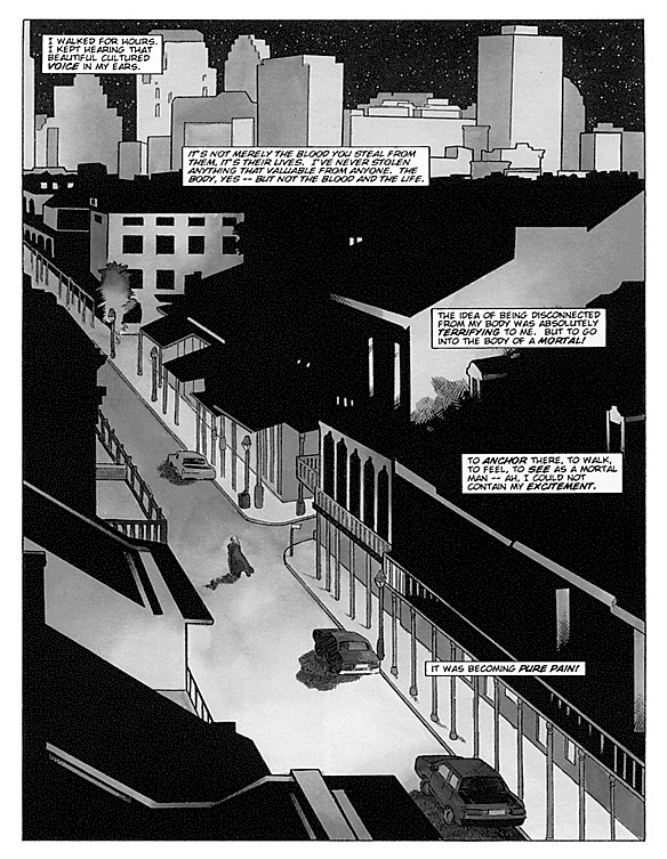
I SHALL
SEE YOU WEDNES-
DAY, AND YOU MUST COME
EARLY! I WANT AS MUCH
OF THE NIGHT AS I
CAN HAVE.



I WAS SICK WITH CONFUSION. I
STOOD THERE, UNABLE TO MOVE.

THE NIGHT, FOR ALL
ITS COLDNESS, WAS
BUSY AND FULL OF
THE MINGLED VOICES
OF THE PASSING
TOURISTS, OF CARS
SLOWING DOWN AS
THEY PASSED BY.

WITHOUT INTENT, WITHOUT WORDS,
I TRIED TO SEE IT AS IT MIGHT BE
IN THE SUNSHINE -- I TRIED TO
IMAGINE THE HEAVENS OVER THIS
SPOT THAT SHOCKING, VAGUE BLUE.



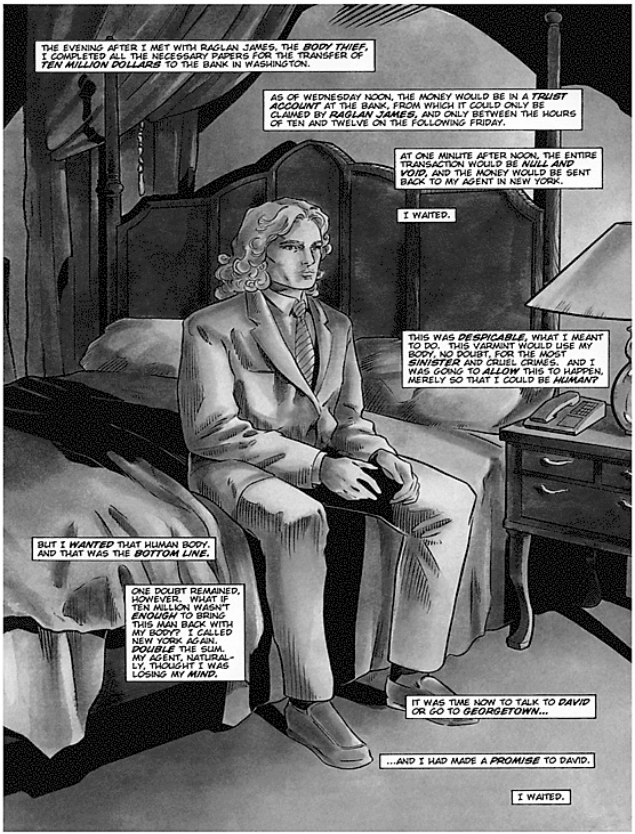
I WALKED FOR HOURS.
I KEPT HEARING THAT
BEAUTIFUL CULTURED
VOICE IN MY EARS.

IT'S NOT MERELY THE BLOOD YOU STEAL FROM
THEM, IT'S THEIR LIVES. I'VE NEVER STOLEN
ANYTHING THAT VALUABLE FROM ANYONE. THE
BODY, YES -- BUT NOT THE BLOOD AND THE LIFE.

THE IDEA OF BEING DISCONNECTED
FROM MY BODY WAS ABSOLUTELY
TERRIFYING TO ME. BUT TO GO
INTO THE BODY OF A MORTAL!

TO ANCHOR THERE, TO WALK,
TO FEEL, TO SEE AS A MORTAL
MAN -- AH, I COULD NOT
CONTAIN MY EXCITEMENT.

IT WAS BECOMING PURE PAIN!

A black and white comic book illustration of a man with curly hair, wearing a suit and tie, sitting on a bed in a dark room. He is looking off to the side with a serious expression. The room has a lamp on a nightstand to his right and a window with curtains in the background.

THE EVENING AFTER I MET WITH RAGLAN JAMES, THE **BODY THIEF**, I COMPLETED ALL THE NECESSARY PAPERS FOR THE TRANSFER OF **TEN MILLION DOLLARS** TO THE BANK IN WASHINGTON.

AS OF WEDNESDAY NOON, THE MONEY WOULD BE IN A **TRUST ACCOUNT** AT THE BANK, FROM WHICH IT COULD ONLY BE CLAIMED BY RAGLAN JAMES, AND ONLY BETWEEN THE HOURS OF TEN AND TWELVE ON THE FOLLOWING FRIDAY.

AT ONE MINUTE AFTER NOON, THE ENTIRE TRANSACTION WOULD BE **NULL AND VOID**, AND THE MONEY WOULD BE SENT BACK TO MY AGENT IN NEW YORK.

I WAITED.

THIS WAS **DESPICABLE**, WHAT I MEANT TO DO. THIS VARMINT WOULD USE MY BODY, NO DOUBT, FOR THE MOST **SINISTER** AND CRUEL CRIMES. AND I WAS GOING TO **ALLOW** THIS TO HAPPEN, MERELY SO THAT I COULD BE **HUMAN?**

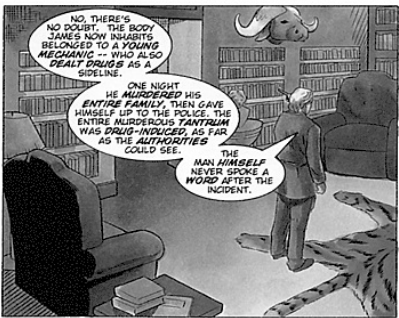
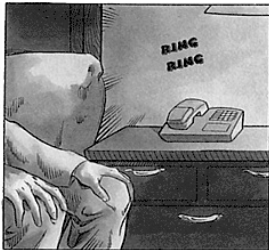
BUT I **WANTED** THAT HUMAN BODY. AND THAT WAS THE **BOTTOM LINE**.

ONE DOUBT REMAINED, HOWEVER. WHAT IF TEN MILLION WASN'T ENOUGH TO BRING THIS MAN BACK WITH MY BODY? I CALLED NEW YORK AGAIN. **DOUBLE** THE SUM. MY AGENT, NATURALLY, THOUGHT I WAS LOSING MY MIND.

IT WAS TIME NOW TO TALK TO DAVID OR GO TO GEORGETOWN...

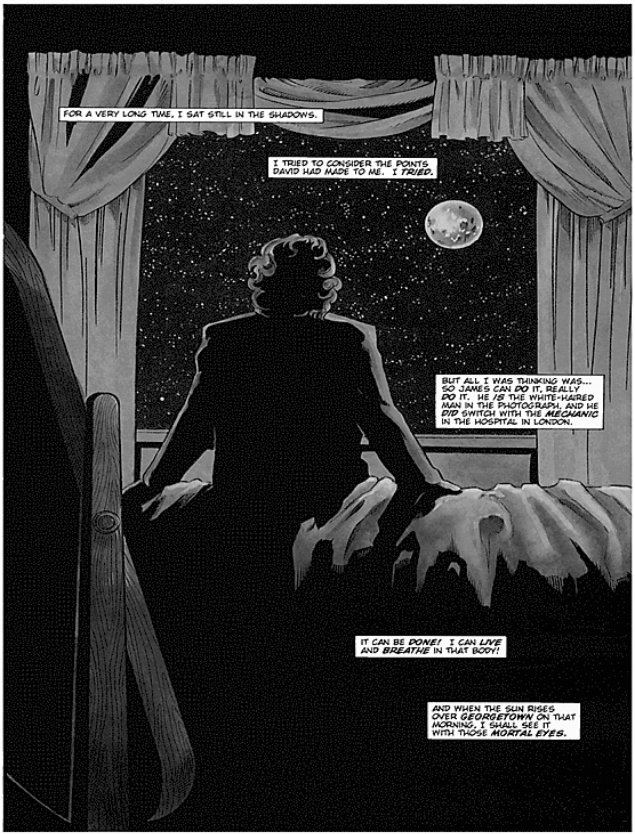
...AND I HAD MADE A **PROMISE** TO DAVID.

I WAITED.









FOR A VERY LONG TIME, I SAT STILL IN THE SHADOWS.

I TRIED TO CONSIDER THE POINTS
DAVID HAD MADE TO ME. I TRIED.

BUT ALL I WAS THINKING WAS...
SO JAMES CAN DO IT, REALLY
DO IT. HE IS THE WHITE-HAIRED
MAN IN THE PHOTOGRAPH, AND HE
DID SWITCH WITH THE MECHANIC
IN THE HOSPITAL IN LONDON.

IT CAN BE DONE! I CAN LIVE
AND BREATHE IN THAT BODY!

AND WHEN THE SUN RISES
OVER GEORGETOWN ON THAT
MORNING, I SHALL SEE IT
WITH THOSE MORTAL EYES.



IT WAS AN HOUR AFTER MIDNIGHT
WHEN I REACHED GEORGETOWN.

IN SPITE OF THE HOUR,
JAMES HIMSELF WAS
NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.



METICULOUS, FASHIONABLE, COSTLY,
AND HIGHLY INDIVIDUAL -- THAT WAS
THE PERSONALITY OF THE PLACE.

IT LOOKED TO ME THE
WAY THE DWELLINGS OF
MORTALS ALWAYS DID --



-- LIKE A SERIES OF
PRISTINE STAGE SETS.



QUITE IMPOSSIBLE TO
BELIEVE I COULD BE
MORTAL, AND BELONG
IN SUCH A HOUSE, EVEN
FOR AN HOUR OR MORE.

I ENTERED
THE HOUSE.

I DECIDED TO TAKE A FEW SIMPLE PRECAUTIONS. I REALLY COULDN'T CONCEIVE OF WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO BE HUMAN.

I MIGHT FEEL QUITE HELPLESS.



I CONCEALED A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY FOR MY LATER USE, HIDING IT INSIDE AN UNUSED CHIMNEY.

I ALSO CONCEALED SOME MONEY IN AN UNUSED BATHROOM, BEHIND A MIRROR ON THE WALL.

AFTER I MADE THESE LITTLE ARRANGEMENTS, I WENT UP ON THE ROOF.



AS I SAID -- I JUST DIDN'T KNOW.

I COULD SEE JAMES JUST TURNING THE CORNER AT THE BASE OF THE HILL, A LOAD OF PARCELS IN HIS ARMS. I LOST SIGHT OF HIM AS HE STARTED HIS ASCENT.

BUT THEN ANOTHER STRANGE VISITOR APPEARED, WITHOUT MAKING THE SLIGHTEST SOUND THAT A MORTAL COULD HEAR.



IT WAS A GREAT DOG.

I'D EXPECTED TO HEAR FROM IT BEFORE THIS TIME, FOR SURELY IT WOULD PICK UP MY SCENT, KNOW INSTINCTIVELY THAT I WASN'T HUMAN, AND THEN BEGIN TO SOUND ITS NATURAL ALARM OF GROWLS AND BARKS.

DOGS HAD DONE THAT ENOUGH TO ME OVER THE CENTURIES.

I HAD A GOOD CHANCE TO STUDY HIM IN THE UNDISTURBED SILENCE, AND HE WAS, VERY SIMPLY, ONE OF THE MOST HANDSOME DOGS I HAD EVER BEHELD.

INDEED, WHEN HE AT LAST LOOKED UP AT ME, I FOUND MYSELF VAGUELY THRILLED BY THE FIERCE INTELLIGENCE GLEAMING IN HIS DARK, ALMOND-SHAPED EYES.



WHY DON'T YOU KNOW ME FOR WHAT I AM?

THIS WAS AN OMEN, THIS DOG.



THERE SEEMED A NEAR-HUMAN COMPREHENSION IN HIM, BUT THERE WAS NO INSTINCTIVE AVERSION AT ALL.

I NUZZLED HIM, AND THIS PRODUCED IN ME A WONDERFUL HAPPINESS, REALLY NEAR TO WEeping.



VERY SUDDENLY THE DOG STIFFENED.

JAMES WAS COMING.

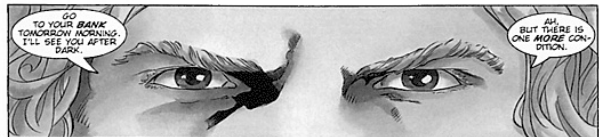
AH, I KNEW THIS WORD, THIS NAME, MOJO. IT HAD TO DO WITH VODOO, GRIS-GRIS, CHARMS. MOJO WAS A GOOD CHARM, A PROTECTIVE CHARM.



GLAD TO SEE YOU! BUT YOU'RE EARLY.

GRRRR





GO
TO YOUR **BANK**
TOMORROW MORNING.
I'LL SEE YOU AFTER
DARK.

AH,
BUT THERE IS
ONE **ADORE** CON-
DITION.



WHAT
IS IT?

FEED
THE **ANIMAL**.
GIVE IT SOME
MEAT.



I MADE MY EXIT SO SWIFTLY HE COULDN'T **SEE** IT.

THE LAST SOUND I HEARD WAS JAMES
CURSING TO HIMSELF **UNGRACEFULLY**
AS HE SLAMMED THE BACK DOOR.



MOJO, AN OMEN.



WHATEVER HAPPENS, I
SHALL **KEEP** THIS DOG.

TOMORROW NIGHT, I THOUGHT, IF
THAT BASTARD HAD BEEN **LYING**, I
SHALL SPLIT OPEN HIS CHEST AND
TEAR OUT HIS BEATING HEART, AND
FEED IT TO THAT BIG, BEAUTIFUL DOG.

AND I DID.

WEDNESDAY AT LAST. NOT HALF AN HOUR HAD PASSED SINCE THE SUN HAD SET. I HAD **STARTLED** HIM WHEN I APPEARED ON THE BACK STEPS.

I WANT THE DETAILS OF HOW YOU PUSHED THE **MECHANIC** OUT OF HIS BODY, AND HOW YOU MANAGED TO FORCE HIM INTO **YOURS**.

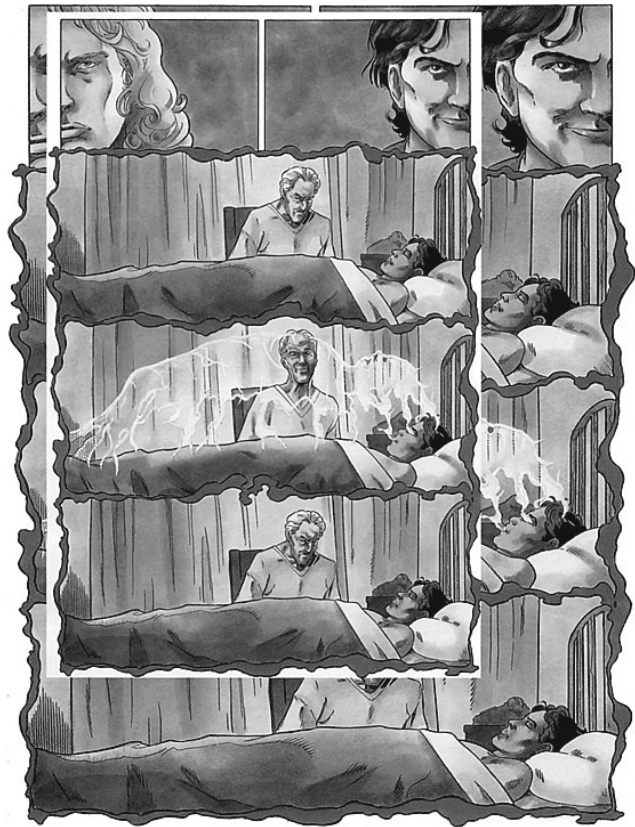
I'D BEEN SEARCHING FOR JUST SUCH A **SPECIMEN** -- A MAN **PSYCHOLOGICALLY SHOCKED** OUT OF ALL WILL AND CAPACITY FOR REASON, YET SOUND OF LIMB AND **BRAIN**.

ONLY A **TELEPATH** COULD HAVE REACHED THE REMNANTS OF INTELLIGENCE STILL **BURIED** WITHIN HIM.

ONCE I'D REACHED THAT **RUDIMENTARY CORE**, IT WAS FAIRLY EASY TO **PLUNDER** HIS MEMORIES AND **MANIPULATE** HIM INTO OBEDIENCE.

THE **POOR CHAP**. I SUSPECT HE THOUGHT I WAS HIS **GUARDIAN ANGEL** AT THE **END**.







"I FINALLY LURED HIM OUT FOR THE SPACE OF SEVERAL SECONDS."



"THAT WAS SUFFICIENT TIME FOR ME TO POP INSIDE OF HIM..."



"...AND AT ONCE FOCUS MY INTENSE ENERGY UPON SHOVING HIM DOWN INTO WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE OLD ME."



"AND YOU DIDN'T GIVE HIM EVEN A MOMENT'S TIME, DID YOU?"



"MONSIEUR DE LIONCOURT, WHAT I DID WAS A MERE TO HIM! HOW DREADFUL TO HAVE LEFT HIM IN THAT BODY, CONFUSED AS HE WAS!"





WHAT'S TO STOP YOU FROM KILLING ME AS SOON AS WE SWITCH BODIES?



TWENTY MILLION DOLLARS WILL STOP ME FROM KILLING YOU. YOU'VE LIBERATED ME, MONSIEUR DE L'INCOURT.

AS OF THIS FRIDAY, AT THE VERY HOUR WHEN CHRIST WAS NAILED TO THE CROSS, I SHALL NEVER HAVE TO STEAL AGAIN.



WHATEVER HIS FACADE, HE WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY ANXIOUS. AND SOMETHING SIMILAR AND MORE ENERVATING WAS BUILDING IN ME...

...WHAT IF THIS DOES WORK?

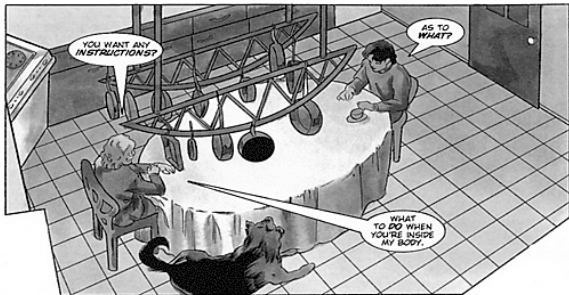


OH, BUT IT WILL WORK. AND BESIDES, IF I TRIED TO HARM YOU, YOUR COMPANIONS WOULD FIND OUT SOONER OR LATER, AND DO AWAY WITH ME VERY QUICKLY INDEED.



YES... IT'S IMPERATIVE THAT YOU STAY AWAY FROM THEM WHILE YOU'RE IN MY BODY. THAT YOU DON'T GO NEAR NEW ORLEANS --

OF COURSE. I'VE CONSIDERED THE ENTIRE ENTERPRISE. PLEASE BE ASSURED.







AH, YES,
THE PETTY CASH...
HOW CONSIDERATE OF
YOU TO REMEMBER. I'M FOR-
GETTING ALL THE IMPOR-
TANT DETAILS IN MY
EXCITEMENT.



THE
REST IS FOR ME,
ONCE WE MAKE THE
SWITCH.

I
TRUST YOU'RE
COMFORTABLE WITH
THE AMOUNT I'VE GIVEN
YOU? THE LITTLE THIEF IN
YOU WON'T BE TEMPTED
TO SCOOP UP WHAT'S
LEFT?



I'LL
DO MY BEST
TO BEHAVE
MYSELF.



WHERE IS
THE CAR?

OUTSIDE,
TO THE LEFT OF
THE FRONT STEPS. RED
PORSCHE ROADSTER --
I THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE
THAT. HERE ARE
THE KEYS.

WHERE
WILL YOU BE
GOING?



WHERE
I WANT TO GO,
OF COURSE. ARE
YOU LOSING YOUR
NERVE?



NO.



ALL
RIGHT. LET'S
BEGIN.

LISTEN
CLOSELY. I WANT
YOU TO RISE OUT OF YOUR
BODY, BUT NOT TILL I'M
FINISHED SPEAKING. YOU'LL
MOVE UP. YOU'VE DONE
IT BEFORE.

WHEN YOU
ARE CLOSE TO THE
CEILING AND LOOKING DIRECT-
LY DOWN ON BOTH OF US AT
THIS TABLE, YOU WILL MAKE A
CONCENTRATED EFFORT TO
MOVE INTO THIS
BODY.

YOU
MUST NOT THINK
OF ANYTHING ELSE. YOU
MUST NOT LET FEAR INTERRUPT
YOUR CONCENTRATION. YOU
MUST NOT WONDER AS TO
HOW THIS IS BEING
DONE.

YOU WANT
TO DESCEND INTO
THIS BODY, YOU WANT TO
CONNECT COMPLETELY AND IN-
STANTANEOUSLY WITH EVERY
FIBER AND CELL. PICTURE
IT AS YOU DO IT!

IMAGINE
YOUR SPIRIT INVADING
THE FINGERS OF EACH HAND,
THE TOES OF EACH FOOT. LOOK
THROUGH THE EYES. THAT IS MOST
IMPORTANT, BECAUSE THE EYES ARE
PART OF THE BRAIN. WHEN YOU
LOOK THROUGH THEM, YOU
ARE ANCHORING WITHIN
THE BRAIN.

DON'T
WAVER. ONCE
YOU'RE IN, IT WILL
TAKE QUITE A BIT OF
EFFORT TO GET
OUT.





I UNDERSTAND. WILL I SEE YOU IN *SPIRIT FORM* WHILE WE'RE CHANGING?



YOU *COULD*, BUT THAT WOULD TAKE A GREAT DEAL OF CONCENTRATION AWAY FROM YOUR IMMEDIATE GOAL.

YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE ANYTHING BUT *THIS BODY* -- YOU WANT TO GET IN IT AND START *MOVING* IT, BREATHING THROUGH IT, AND *SEEING* THROUGH IT.

YES.

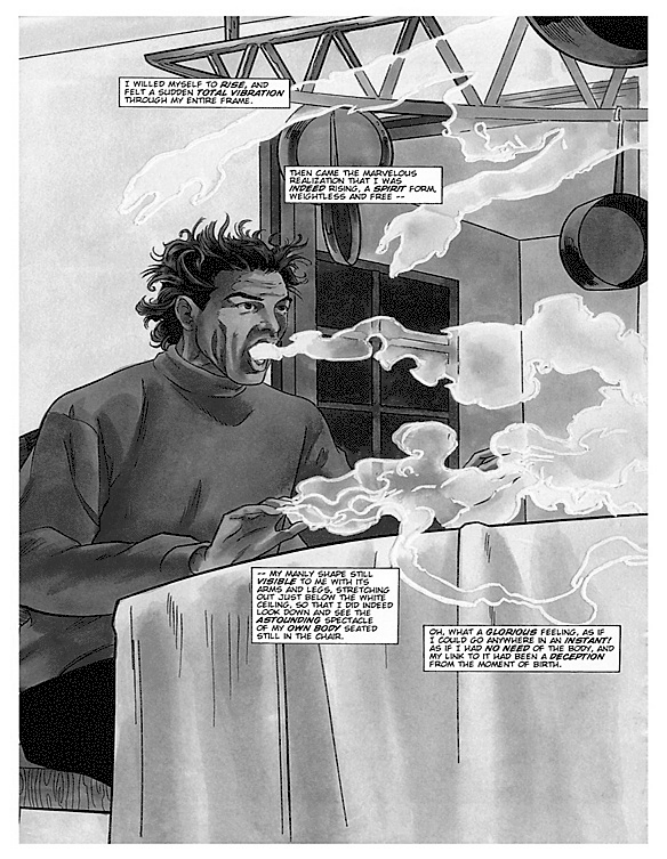


NOW, ONE THING WHICH WILL *FRIGHTEN* YOU IS THE SIGHT OF YOUR OWN BODY, *LIFELESS* OR INHABITED FINALLY BY ME. DON'T ALLOW THIS TO GET THE *BETTER* OF YOU.

BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THAT I SHALL ACCOMPLISH THE *POSSESSION* WITHOUT INJURY TO YOUR BODY, AND THEN I SHALL LEAVE IMMEDIATELY, SO AS TO RELIEVE YOU OF THAT *REMINDER* OF WHAT WE'VE DONE.

YOU WON'T SEE ME AGAIN UNTIL *FRIDAY MORNING*, AS WE'VE AGREED.



A black and white comic book panel showing a man with dark, curly hair and a mustache, wearing a dark turtleneck sweater. He is sitting at a table covered with a white cloth. He has a shocked or intense expression, with his mouth wide open as if shouting or gasping. A large, billowing cloud of white smoke or steam is coming out of his mouth, partially obscuring his face and the table. In the background, there is a kitchen setting with a window, a hanging pot, and some structural beams. The overall tone is dramatic and surreal.

I WILLED MYSELF TO *RISE*, AND FELT A SUDDEN *TOTAL VIBRATION* THROUGH MY ENTIRE FRAME.

THEN CAME THE MARVELOUS REALIZATION THAT I WAS *INDEED RISING*, A *SPHRYT FORM*, WEIGHTLESS AND FREE --

-- MY *MANLY SHAPE* STILL *VISIBLE* TO ME WITH ITS *ARMS AND LEGS*, STRETCHING OUT JUST BELOW THE *WHITE CEILING*, SO THAT I DID *INDEED LOOK DOWN* AND SEE THE *ASTOUNDING SPECTACLE* OF MY *OWN BODY* SEATED STILL IN THE *CHAIR*.

OH, WHAT A *GLORIOUS* FEELING, AS IF I *COULD GO ANYWHERE IN AN INSTANT!* AS IF I *HAD NO NEED OF THE BODY*, AND MY *LINK TO IT* HAD BEEN A *DECEPTION* FROM THE *MOMENT OF BIRTH*.



I MUSTN'T BECOME DISTRACTED.
THE SWITCH WAS THE THING!

"DOWN, DOWN" INTO
THAT BODY!" I SAID
ALoud, BUT THERE WAS
NO VOICE AUDIBLE...

...AND THEN WITHOUT WORDS I FORCED MYSELF TO PLUMMET
AND MERGE WITH THAT NEW FLESH, THAT PHYSICAL FORM.



A LOUD *RUSHING* FILLED MY EARS, AND THEN A SENSE OF *CONSTRICTION*, AS IF MY ENTIRE SELF WERE BEING FORCED THROUGH A NARROW, SLIPPERY TUBE.

EXCRUCIATING! I
WANTED FREEDOM!

BUT I COULD FEEL MYSELF FILLING THE EMPTY ARMS AND LEGS, THE FLESH HEAVY AND TINGLING AS IT CLOSED OVER ME, AS A MASK OF SIMILAR SENSATIONS CLOSED OVER MY FACE.



I STRUGGLED TO OPEN MY EYES BEFORE I EVEN REALIZED WHAT I WAS DOING, THAT I WAS FLEXING THE LIDS OF THIS MORTAL BODY --

-- THAT I WAS STARING THROUGH MORTAL EYES INTO THE DIMLY LIGHTED ROOM, STARING AT MY OLD BODY OPPOSITE --

-- STARING AT MY OLD BLUE EYES PEERING BACK AT ME, STARING AT MY OLD TANNED SKIN.





AND
YOU -- GET OUT
OF HERE! GET
OUT!



THE CREATURE THAT HAD
BEEN ME DANCED PAST ME,
ARMS FLAILING STILL --



-- AND CRASHED THROUGH
THE BACK DOOR, SHATTERING
THE WINDOWPANE, AND LET-
TING IN A COLD GUST OF WIND.



GET
OUT!

A black and white comic book illustration. A man with curly hair, wearing a suit and tie, is floating in the air. He has a wide, toothy grin and his arms are outstretched. He is positioned in front of a large, leafless tree. In the background, there is a two-story house with a snow-covered roof and a fence. The ground is covered in snow. In the top left corner, there is a small circular inset showing a full moon.

I SAW HIM FOR ONE LAST
INSTANT, SUSPENDED IN
MIDAIR JUST OUTSIDE THE
BACK DOOR, HIS LIMBS
MOVING AS THOUGH HE
WERE A SWIMMER IN AN
INVISIBLE SEA.

HIS BLUE EYES
WERE STILL WIDE
AND SENSELESS,
AS IF HE COULDN'T
WORK THE PRETER-
NATURAL FLESH
AROUND THEM INTO
AN EXPRESSION.

HIS MOUTH -- MY
OLD MOUTH -- WAS
SPREAD WIDE IN A
MEANINGLESS GRIN.

THEN HE WAS GONE.

THE ROOM WAS FREEZING. WIND
GUSTED INTO EVERY CORNER.

EACH BREATH I TOOK HURT ME. I
WAS SQUINTING AGAINST THE SNOW,
WHICH FLEW RIGHT INTO MY EYES --

-- AND I WAS TRAPPED
IN THIS STRANGE BODY
PADDED WITH LEAD WEIGHTS
AND MATTRESS TICKING, AND
THE COLD AIR WAS STINGING
MY FACE AND MY HANDS.

GOOD
GOD, MOJO, IT'S
HAPPENED.

I'M
A MORTAL
MAN!



I AM ACTUALLY FREE OF THAT PRETER-NATURAL BODY! I AM A HUMAN BEING!

I STRAINED TO SEE THROUGH THE DARKNESS, AND COULDN'T MAKE OUT ANYTHING CLEARLY AT ALL. IT WAS DIM, TERRIBLY DIM. IT SEEMED I WAS UNDER WATER AND THE WATER WAS MURKY, MAYBE EVEN CLOUDED BY INK.

THIS IS NORMAL. THIS IS MORTAL. THIS IS HOW THEY SEE.

HOW HIDEOUSLY GLOOMY, THE DULL GOLD LIGHT CREEPING UP INTO THE CORNERS, THE PLASTER MOLDINGS AT THE TOPS OF THE WALLS VANISHING INTO SHADOW, UNPENETRABLE SHADOW.

THE COLD WIND WAS THE WORST PART. MY TEETH WERE CHATTERING. THE STINGING PAIN IN MY SKIN WAS WHOLLY DIFFERENT FROM THE PAIN I FELT AS A VAMPIRE.

I LOOKED AT MY FACE IN THE MIRROR. AH, YES. I WAS BEHIND IT NOW, AND HOW AMAZINGLY DIFFERENT IT LOOKED. GONE WERE THE TIGHTNESS, AND THE ANFUL NERVOUS GLITTER OF THE EYES.

THERE WAS A YOUNG MAN STARING AT ME, AND HE LOOKED MORE THAN A LITTLE AFRAID.

I WENT INTO THE UNUSED ROOM UPSTAIRS, WHERE I'D HIDDEN THE MONEY IN THE CHIMNEY... AND AS I REACHED UP, I FELT NOT THE ENVELOPE WHICH I'D LODGED THERE, BUT A SINGLE SHEET OF PAPER.

I REMOVED IT, ALREADY IN A FLURRY.

YOU ARE A SILLY FOOL TO THINK THAT A MAN OF MY ABILITIES WOULDN'T FIND YOUR LITTLE STASH. HAVE A PLEASANT ADVENTURE. I SHALL SEE YOU FRIDAY, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!
Raglan James

BASTARD!

NO DRIVERS' LICENSE. NO KEYS. NO MONEY.
NO CAR. I FOUND THE **PASSPORT** IN THE
KITCHEN, BUT NOT THE **WALLET**.

AH, THIS LITTLE
DEVIL. WHAT I
WAS GOING TO
DO TO HIM!
HOW COULD HE
THINK HE WOULD
GET AWAY WITH
THIS? WHAT IN
THE WORLD WAS
HE THINKING...

WAS IT AS HARD TO FIGURE OUT AS ALL
THAT? HE WASN'T COMING BACK, WAS HE?

I CALLED MY NEW YORK AGENT. ON AND ON
IT RANG. NO ONE THERE. **MOST STRANGE,**
AND DAMNED INCONVENIENT.

I CALLED PARIS.
QUICKLY I TOLD
MY AGENT THERE
THAT I WAS IN
GEORGETOWN,
THAT I NEEDED
TWENTY THOU-
SAND DOLLARS,
NO, BEST SEND
THIRTY, AND I
MUST HAVE IT
NOW.

HE EXPLAINED THAT IT WOULD BE **NOON** IN
GEORGETOWN BEFORE THE MONEY COULD REACH
ME, AND HE GAVE ME HIS ASSURANCE THAT
EVERYTHING WOULD BE HANDLED **AT ONCE**.

I WENT UPSTAIRS, INTO THE MASTER
BATH, AND TRIED THE WATER. **HOT**
AND STRONG. **GOOD**. I STOOD IN
THAT SHOWER FOR A LONG TIME.

A FIT OF **COUGHING** CAUGHT ME. THE PAIN IN MY THROAT WAS
QUITE CONSIDERABLE, AND MY EYES WERE **WATERING**. JUST
A **MORTAL COLD**, I THOUGHT. THE RESULT OF LETTING MYSELF
BECOME SO MISERABLY CHILLED. IT WILL **HAR** THINGS, BUT IT
IS ALSO AN EXPERIENCE, AN EXPERIENCE I MUST EXPLORE.

BEST TO **SLEEP NOW**, AND WHEN I
WAKE, THE **LIGHT OF DAY** WILL BE
COMING INTO THIS ROOM. EVEN IF
THE SKY IS GRAY, IT WILL BE **WON-
DROUS**. IT WILL BE **DAY**. FORGET
ALL THIS ABYSSAL STRUGGLE AND
TRIVIA AND **FEAR** --

-- TOMORROW I WILL SEE THE
WORLD OF DAY AS I'VE LONGED
TO SEE IT ALL THESE YEARS.

IT FELT **TERRIBLE** TO BE IN THIS
SLUGGISH HUMAN BODY! IT
FELT TERRIBLE NOT TO HAVE
MY **PRETERNATURAL POWERS**.

THE NEXT TIME I WOKE UP, MOJO WAS LICKING MY FACE.

I LAUGHED AT HIM, THEN COUGHED AGAIN, THROAT BURNING, AND REALIZED I'D BEEN COUGHING FOR SOME TIME.



MON DIEU -- LOOK AT IT, MOJO! THIS IS THE MIRACLE!

THE MORTAL ACHEs AND PAINS DIDN'T MATTER. THIS WAS THE BISHOPAL PROMISE WHICH HAD GONE UNFULFILLED FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS.

WITHIN MOMENTS OF LEAVING THE TOWNHOUSE, OF STEPPING OUT INTO THE GLORIOUS DAYLIGHT, I KNEW THAT THIS EXPERIENCE WOULD BE WORTH ALL OF THE TRIALS AND THE PAIN.



AND NO MORTAL CHILL, WITH ALL ITS DEBILITATING SYMPTOMS, WOULD KEEP ME FROM FRODLICKING IN THE MORNING SUN.

IGNORING THE COUGH, WHICH WAS GROWING WORSE BY THE HOUR, AND A NEW BLURRING OF VISION, WHICH WAS A REAL NUISANCE, I TOOK MOJO WITH ME INTO WASHINGTON, THE CAPITAL OF THE NATION PROPER.

THIS WAS EXTRAORDINARY, ABSOLUTELY EXTRAORDINARY. AND IN MY EUPHORIA, I WAS CERTAIN THAT I WOULD CARRY WITH ME FOREVER THE MEMORY OF THIS SIMPLE DAY.



THE WALK BACK TO GEORGETOWN SEEMED AT TIMES AN IMPOSSIBLE FEAT.



BY THE TIME I REACHED THE AGENCY TO COLLECT MY MONEY, I KNEW THAT THE FEVER AND CHILLS WERE GETTING THE BEST OF ME AND I MUST SEEK SHELTER.



YOU SHOULD GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM, MISTER. LOTS OF PEOPLE WITH THE FLU OUT THERE. PRACTICALLY AN EPIDEMIC EVERY YEAR!

I NODDED AGREEMENT, BUT I HADN'T THE SLIGHTEST INTENTION OF SPENDING MY REMAINING MORTAL HOURS IN THE GLITCHES OF DOCTORS.

AFTER PURCHASING SOME NEW CLOTHES AT THE GEORGETOWN MALL, I FOUND A RESTAURANT AT A BEAUTIFUL HOTEL WITH THE LOVELY ROMANTIC NAME, THE FOUR SEASONS.

I ORDERED A FEAST FOR MYSELF AND MOJO, ADDING EVERY CHOCOLATE DESSERT ON THE MENU TO MY ORDER.

DEEP DRIFTS OF SNOW LAY EVERYWHERE. THE STREETS WERE IMPASSABLE TO TRAFFIC, AND THERE WERE TIMES WHEN I FELL TO MY KNEES, AND MOJO LICKED MY FACE AS THOUGH HE WERE TRYING TO KEEP ME WARM.

BUT I CONTINUED, STRUGGLING ON, WHATEVER MY STATE OF MIND AND BODY, UNTIL AT LAST I TURNED THE CORNER, AND SAW THE LIGHTS OF THE FAMILIAR TOWNHOUSE AHEAD.

I MANAGED TO REACH THE TOWNHOUSE SAFELY, AND I LAY DOWN SHIVERING ON THE LIVINGROOM FLOOR. THE BODY THIEF WOULD SOON BE HERE. I WOULD HAVE MY OWN FORM BACK AGAIN, ALL MY POWERS!

AND THEN HOW SWEET IT WOULD BE TO REFLECT ON EVERYTHING, SAFE AND SOUND IN MY DIGGS IN NEW ORLEANS, WHEN ILLNESS AND COLD WOULD MEAN NOTHING, WHEN AGES AND PAINS WOULD EXIST NO MORE --

MOJO, I CAN'T ENDURE THIS BODY A MOMENT LONGER!

I TRIED TO STAY AWAKE, BUT I COULDN'T.

-- WHEN I WAS THE VAMPIRE LESTAT AGAIN, BOARDED OVER THE ROOFTOPS, REACHING WITH OUTSTRETCHED HANDS FOR THE DISTANT STARS.

WHEN I OPENED MY EYES AGAIN,
IT WAS TO THE LIGHT OF DAY.

OH,
GOD, HELP
ME.

I KNEW
IT. I KNEW
IT! WHAT A FOOL
I'VE BEEN, WHAT AN
EXTRAORDINARY
FOOL!

YOU MIS-
ERABLE WRETCH,
YOU DESPICABLE BODY
THIEF, YOU WILL NOT GET
AWAY WITH THIS,
DAMN YOU!

AND THIS
BODY! THIS BODY
IN WHICH YOU'VE LEFT
ME, WHICH IS ALL I HAVE
WITH WHICH TO HUNT
YOU DOWN, IS TRULY,
TRULY SICK.

WATCH
OUT!

CALL AN
AMBULANCE!

NO! I HAVE
TO GET TO NEW
ORLEANS!

LIE
STILL, MISTER.
THEY'RE COMING
FOR YOU.



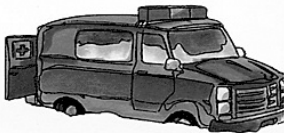
GOOD LORD, CLAUDIA, THE SUNLIGHT! GET OUT OF IT!



THE AMBULANCE. OXYGEN MASK. NEEDLE. AND I UNDERSTOOD.

I WAS GOING TO DIE IN THIS BODY, AND IT WOULD BE SO SIMPLE! LIKE A BILLION OTHER MORTALS, I WAS GOING TO DIE.

AH, THIS WAS THE REASON FOR ALL OF IT, THE REASON THE BODY THIEF HAD COME TO ME, THE ANGEL OF DEATH CAME TO GIVE ME THE MEANS WHICH I HAD SOUGHT WITH LIES AND PRIDE AND SELF-DECEPTION.



I WAS GOING TO DIE.



GOD, PLEASE, NOT LIKE THIS, NOT IN THIS BODY!

NOT YET, NOT NOW! I DON'T WANT TO DIE!

I WAS CRYING. I WAS BROKEN AND TERRIFIED AND CRYING.



DON'T LET ME DIE, PLEASE DON'T LET ME DIE. NOT NOW, NOT LIKE THIS, NOT IN THIS BODY!

HELP ME!







AT SOME POINT I BEGAN DRIFTING IN AND OUT OF SLEEP, AWARE THAT WE WERE IN A LITTLE CAR, AND THAT MOJO WAS WITH US, AND THAT WE WERE DRIVING THROUGH WOODED, SNOW-COVERED HILLS.

I WAS WRAPPED IN A BLANKET, AND FEELING MISERABLY SICK. I SCARCELY REMEMBERED OUR RETURN TO THE TOWNHOUSE, AND THE FINDING OF MOJO. AT LAST WE CAME TO A HALT BY A SMALL COTTAGE.



THE ROOMS WERE COZY AND WARM.

I WANTED TO SINK DOWN INTO A CLEAN BED, BUT I WAS TOO SOILED FOR THAT, AND INSISTED THAT I BE ALLOWED TO BATHE THIS DISTASTEFUL BODY.



I FELT A LITTLE ASHAMED, LETTING HER WASH ME. SHE EXPLAINED IT WAS THE SORT OF THING A NURSE DID ALL THE TIME.

SHE SAID SHE HAD SPENT HER LIFE IN THE FOREIGN MISSIONS, NURSING THE SICK, IN PLACES SO SOILED AND ILL-EQUIPPED THAT EVEN THE OVERCROWDED WASHINGTON HOSPITAL SEEMED LIKE A DREAM COMPARED TO THEM.

IT'S THAT BAD? TO BE HUMAN?

I WAS TALKING TO HER, TRYING TO EXPLAIN TO HER HOW I HAD COME TO BE IN THIS PRECIPITANT, AND HOW I HAD TO REACH LOUIS, SO THAT HE COULD GIVE ME THE POWERFUL BLOOD. WAS THIS HUMAN TO WANT HER UNDERSTANDING, THIS DESPERATE FEAR THAT I WOULD DIE IN HER ARMS, AND NO ONE WOULD EVER KNOW WHO I'D BEEN OR WHAT HAD TAKEN PLACE? AH, BUT THE OTHERS KNEW, AND THEY HAD NOT COME TO HELP ME.



YOU DON'T HAVE TO REMIND ME. I KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE WHAT I'VE TOLD YOU.

AH, BUT OUR FANTASIES ARE LIKE OUR DREAMS. THEY HAVE MEANING.



DEAR GOD, HELP ME... I WANT MY BODY BACK.

DARKNESS FELL AROUND THE LITTLE HOUSE.

SLEEP
NOW. TRY NOT
TO WORRY.

AND AT LAST A DEEP SLEEP WAS COMING TO ME, DEEP
AS THE SNOW OUTSIDE, DEEP AS THE DARKNESS.

WHEN I WOKE, IT WAS DAWN.
COLORLESS AND BRIGHT.

YOU
BROUGHT ME
THROUGH
IT.

YES, YOU'RE
BETTER.

AH, BUT WHY HAS SHE
DONE ALL THIS FOR ME?
I THOUGHT. WHY? AND
WHAT CAN I DO FOR HER?

WHATEVER HAPPENED, I WOULD
NOT LEAVE HER UNTIL I KNEW
WHAT I COULD DO TO REPAY HER.

I LIKED HER. I LIKED THE DARKNESS
INSIDE HER, THE CONCEALED QUALITY
OF HER, THE CANDOR IN HER EYES.

WHY
DID YOU BRING
ME HERE? WHY
ME?

THERE
WERE OTHERS
THERE....

BECAUSE
YOU'RE NOT LIKE
ANYONE I'VE EVER
KNOWN.

YOU MAKE
ME THINK OF A
STORY I READ
ONCE...

...ABOUT AN
ANGEL FORCED
TO COME DOWN TO
EARTH IN A HUMAN
BODY.





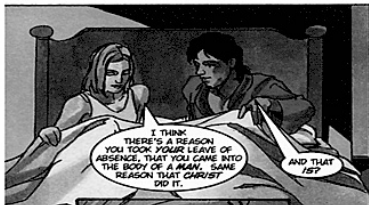
THAT'S THE ANSWER, THEN, AS TO WHY YOU'VE BROUGHT ME HERE.

PERHAPS, I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR THE MAN, FOR THE MOMENT.

GOD KNOWS, I WAS SO FRIGHTENED OF EVERY-ONE ELSE. I'M NOT FRIGHTENED OF YOU.



COME, LIE DOWN AND SLEEP. THERE'S TIME FOR ME TO HEAL AND FOR YOU TO BE CERTAIN IT'S WHAT YOU REALLY WANT.



I THINK THERE'S A REASON YOU TOOK YOUR LEAVE OF ABSENCE, THAT YOU CAME INTO THE BODY OF A MAN. SAME REASON THAT CHRIST DID IT.

AND THAT IS?



REDEMPTION.



AH, YES, TO BE SAVED. NOW WOULDN'T THAT BE LOVELY?

I WANTED TO SAY MORE -- HOW PERFECTLY IMPOSSIBLE IT WAS TO EVEN CONSIDER SUCH A THING -- BUT I WAS SLIDING AWAY, INTO A DREAM.

TO BE SAVED. WHAT A THOUGHT...WHAT A LOVELY, EXTRAVAGANT, AND IMPOSSIBLE THOUGHT.

HOW NICE TO HAVE FOUND THE ONE MORTAL WOMAN IN ALL THE WORLD WHO WOULD SERIOUSLY THINK OF SUCH A THING.



EARLY MORNING, JUST BEFORE THE SUN COMES. THE TIME WHEN IN THE PAST I WAS OFTEN IN MEDITATION, TIRED, AND HALF IN LOVE WITH THE CHANGING SKY.

SLOWLY, I KISSED GRETCHEN'S CHEEKS, AND THE FLESH BENEATH HER EYES. I WANTED TO FEEL HER EYELASHES THROUGH MY LIPS. I WANTED TO FEEL THE FLESH OF HER THROAT.

NOT FOR KILLING, BUT FOR KISSING.



SHE WAKED SLOWLY UNDER MY TOUCH.

TRUST IN ME. I WON'T HURT YOU.



A COARSE WARM EXCITEMENT WENT THROUGH ME.



NO THOUGHTS CAME TO ME OF THE BLOOD DRINKING... NO THOUGHT AT ALL OF THE THUNDER OF THE LIFE INSIDE HER WHICH I MIGHT HAVE CONSUMED, A DARK DRAUGHT, AT ANOTHER TIME.



RATHER THE MOMENT WAS PERFUMED WITH THE SOFT HEAT OF HER LIVING FLESH, AND IT SEEMED VILE THAT ANYTHING COULD HARM HER, ANYTHING HAD THE COMMON MYSTERY OF HER --

-- OF HER TRUST AND HER YEARNING AND HER DEEP AND COMMON FEAR.

IN HER NEW *PASSION*, SHE SEEMED *HEEDLESS*,
AND COMPLETELY UNDER MY *COMMAND*.

BUT WHAT OF THE *DANGERS*?
DID SHE *CARE* ABOUT THEM?

IT WAS THIS
SURRENDER
THAT SHE
NEEDED, IT
WAS WHAT
SHE *REQUIRED*
OF HERSELF.



AND THERE IT WAS AGAIN, THE *MYSTERY* -- THAT
SOMETHING COULD BE SO PERFECTLY FINISHED, AND
COMPLETE, AND HAVE LASTED SUCH A *LITTLE WHILE*.

SUCH A *PRECIOUS* LITTLE WHILE.



I'LL GO BACK, OF COURSE. THIS MAY SOUND ABSURD, BUT IT WAS A DIFFICULT THING TO LEAVE IN THE FIRST PLACE. BUT THIS QUESTION OF CHASTITY -- IT HAD BECOME A DESTRUCTIVE OBSESSION.



AND NOW YOU KNOW THAT IT'S NOT REALLY SO VERY IMPORTANT AT ALL WHETHER OR NOT YOU SLEEP WITH A MAN.

ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU FOUND OUT?

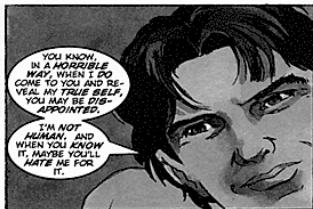


PERHAPS. THERE WAS A VANITY IN IT, TOO. VANITY IS ALWAYS THE ENEMY. THAT'S WHAT TROUBLED ME MOST ABOUT MY CHASTITY -- THE PRIDE I FELT IN IT.



I WANT TO ASK YOU A QUESTION. ANSWER ME FROM YOUR HEART. IF I WIN MY BATTLE -- IF I RE-GAIN MY BODY -- DO YOU WANT ME TO COME TO YOU? DO YOU WANT ME TO SHOW YOU THAT I'VE BEEN TELLING THE TRUTH?

YES, IF YOU WIN THIS BATTLE, IF YOU RECOVER YOUR OLD FORM, FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, COME TO ME! I WANT TO... I WANT TO KNOW!



YOU KNOW, IN A HORRIBLE WAY, WHEN I DO COME TO YOU AND RE-VEAL MY TRUE SELF, YOU MAY BE DIS-APPOINTED.

I'M NOT HUMAN. AND WHEN YOU KNOW IT, MAYBE YOU'LL HATE ME FOR IT.



NO. I COULD NEVER HATE YOU. AND TO KNOW THAT ALL YOU'VE SAID IS TRUE?

THAT WOULD BE...A MIRACLE.



PERHAPS, GRETCHEN. BUT WE ARE A VISION WITHOUT REVELATION. WE ARE A MIRACLE WITHOUT MEANING.

DO YOU REALLY WANT THAT CROSS ALONG WITH SO MANY OTHERS?



ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, I MUST SEE YOU AGAIN!



YOU WILL, MA CHERE. THAT I PROMISE YOU. I'LL FIND THE MISSION IN FRENCH GUIANA. I'LL FIND YOU.

BEFORE I LEFT HER, I PHONED MY MAN IN NEW YORK. A VOICE CAME ON THE LINE, AND SLOWLY LET ME KNOW IN AWKWARD TERMS THAT MY AGENT THERE HAD BEEN KILLED. ROBBERY HAD BEEN AFFIRMED AS THE MOTIVE FOR THE ATTACK — HIS COMPUTER AND ALL HIS FILES HAD BEEN STOLEN.

THE MAN'S BODY HAD BEEN ENTIRELY DRAINED OF BLOOD.

WHEN I PUT DOWN THE PHONE, I WAS TREMBLING WITH RAGE. AH, THE LITTLE MONSTER! IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR HIM TO HAVE THE BODY OF THE GOD, HE MUST RANSACK THE GOD'S STOREHOUSES! THE LITTLE FIEND!

OH, TO THINK OF THE DENUNCIATIONS LOUIS WOULD HEAP UPON MY HEAD BEFORE HE CONSENTED TO HELP ME! AND WHAT IF MARIUS KNEW? OH, THAT WAS TOO AWFUL TO CONTEMPLATE. I JUST HAD TO REACH NEW ORLEANS AS QUICKLY AS I COULD.

MY FAREWELL TO GRETCHEN WOULD NOT BE THE GRACEFUL, SLOW LEAVE-TAKING I'D ENVISIONED. BUT SURELY SHE WOULD UNDERSTAND. MUCH WAS HAPPENING WITHIN THE COMPLEX DELUSIONARY WORLD OF HER MYSTERIOUS LOVER.

IT WAS TIME TO PART.



THE TRIP TO NEW ORLEANS
WAS A SMALL NIGHTMARE.

THE FLIGHT ITSELF
WAS HELLISH. I
DID LITTLE MORE
THAN LIE THERE IN
A STUPOR, WAITING
FOR THE PLANE
TO EXPLODE.



AT LAST, WE MADE OUR TERRIFYING DESCENT, AMID A
RAINSTORM OF BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS. I COLLECTED
MOJO AND LED HIM BOLDLY INTO THE BACK OF A TAXI.

IT WAS NEAR MIDNIGHT WHEN
WE REACHED THE TREE-LINED
STREETS OF UPTOWN, WHEN I
SAW THE DISMAL, ABANDONED
HOUSE OF LOUIS'S PROPERTY.



I HAD NEVER BEHELD WITH MORTAL EYES
A DWELLING AS FORLORN AS THE GREAT
MASSIVE ABANDONED HOUSE WHICH STOOD
BEFORE LOUIS'S HIDDEN SHACK.

FOR ONE MOMENT, I FELT
A TERRIBLE IRRATIONAL
FEAR THAT NO BEING
DWELT IN THIS PLACE --

-- THAT I WAS MAD,
AND DESTINED TO
REMAIN IN THIS WEAK
HUMAN BODY FOREVER.



WE MADE OUR WAY AROUND THE MAIN HOUSE TO LOUIS'S BELOVED
LITTLE SHACK, WHERE HE SPENT ALL OF HIS TIME, READING HIS BOOKS.



LOUIS?



LOUIS?
LOUIS, IT IS I,
LESTATI.

LOUIS?



A POWERFUL RELIEF COURSED THROUGH ME. I WAS HERE! I WAS ALMOST SAFE! AND I WAS NOT MAD.



WE'VE MADE IT, MOJO. AND SOON WE'LL BE AFTER THAT DEVIL. WE'LL FIND A WAY TO DEAL WITH HIM.



I REALIZED THAT I WAS SHIVERING... INDEED, I WAS FEELING THE OLD TELLTALE CONGESTION IN MY CHEST.



LOUIS, FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN, COME! I NEED YOU!



UUGH!



I COULDN'T SPEAK, NOR COULD I FREE MYSELF. A GREAT PIERCING CRY CAME FROM MOJO, AND THEN HE, TOO, FELL SILENT. I STRUGGLED FRANTICALLY AND HELPLESSLY IN PURE TERROR.



LOUIS,
IT'S LESTAT! I'M
IN THE BODY, THE
HUMAN BODY!

LESTAT?



COULDN'T
YOU HAVE GIVEN THE
THE CHANCE TO *BREAK*?
DO YOU KILL ANY WIFELESS
MORTAL WHO BLUNDERS
INTO YOUR LITTLE
HOUSE?

AND YOU
KILLED THE DOG,
DIDN'T YOU? YOU
MONSTER!



LOUIS,
THE WORST HAS
HAPPENED. THE
VERY WORST.

THE BODY
THIEF MADE THE
SWITCH. BUT HE'S *STO-*
LEN MY BODY AND HAS NO
INTENTION OF GIVING
IT BACK TO ME.



OH,
THANK GOD, HE'S
ALIVE.

IF
YOU'D DONE THAT,
I WOULD NEVER
NEVER, NEVER HAVE
FORGIVEN YOU.



IT
REALLY IS
YOU.

YOU'RE
DAMNED RIGHT
IT'S ME!



NOW, WILL
YOU PLEASE MAKE A
FIRE OF SOME SORT IN
THAT MISERABLE LITTLE
HEARTH? I'M FREEZING
IN THIS MORTAL
BODY!



GOOD
GOD...WHAT
HAVE YOU DONE
NOW?

TWO A.M. I HAD POURED OUT THE WHOLE TALE.

YOU KNOW WHY I DO IT. I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU. BUT NOW, IT MUST BE UNDONE. YOU CANNOT IMAGINE HOW ABSOLUTELY REVOLTING IT IS TO BE IN THIS BODY.

NOW, PLEASE, DO IT QUICKLY. DO IT WITH YOUR GREATEST SKILL. I'M READY NOW. THERE NEED BE NO PREPARATION.

I CANNOT DO THIS.

WHAT? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU CAN'T DO IT?

LOUIS, FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, BE QUICK. WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?

OH, I DON'T BLAME YOU FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE. BUT CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED?

LESTAT, YOU HAVE DONE IT. YOU HAVE BEEN REBORN A MORTAL MAN.

LOUIS, WE ARE WASTING TIME! I HAVE TO GO AFTER THAT MONSTER! HE WAS MY BODY!

LESTAT, THE OTHERS WILL DEAL WITH HIM. PERHAPS THEY ALREADY HAVE.

DON'T YOU THINK THEY KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED? THEY MUST KNOW! AND IT COULD WELL BE THAT YOUR BODY HAS ALREADY BEEN DESTROYED!

THEY WOULDN'T DO THAT....



HOW WEARY I WAS, HOW SEARED FROM
MY OWN ANGER, HOW CLOSE TO DESPAIR,
HAD I EVER IN ALL MY MISERY BEEN THIS
COMPLETELY WITHOUT HOPE?



I HURLED CANDLES AT THE
HEAPS OF DEBRIS THAT REMAINED,
AND I FLUNG BURNING BOOKS
AT THE WET SHUTTERS.

I KICKED OUT
HOLES IN THE
ROTTED PLAS-
TER AND THREW
THE BURNING
CANDLES IN
UPON THE OLD
LATHING, AND
THEN I SET
AFIRE THE
WORN, THREAD-
BARE RUGS.

I WAS ABOUT TO RETREAT WHEN I SAW
SOMETHING NEAR THE BURNING HOUSE --

-- AN UNEARTHLY AND DIM WHITE FIGURE,
STANDING STILL AS AN APPARITION.

IT WAS MARIUS!

YES, YES,
BURN!
OH, YOU
DESERVE THIS,
YOU TREACHEROUS
UNGRATEFUL
BASTARD!

MARIUS.

NEVER HAVE I SEEN SUCH
A PERFECT REFLECTION OF
FURY, AND THERE WAS
NOT THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT
THAT IT WAS WHAT HE
MEANT FOR ME TO SEE.

MARIUS!
MARIUS, HELP
ME!

BUT IT WAS USELESS
AND I *KNEW* IT.



YOU THINK
I'M DEFEATED, MARIUS.
YOU THINK YOU'VE PASSED
YOUR JUDGMENT, AND THAT'S
THE END OF IT. WELL, YOU
ARE WRONG.

I HAVE
TO FIND THE BODY
THIEF, AND YOU MUST
GIVE ME TIME. IF YOU WILL
NOT HELP ME, YOU MUST
GRANT ME THAT
MUCH.



WHO IN ALL
THE WORLD
WOULD
HELP ME?

DAVID WAS MY ONLY
HOPE -- THOUGH WHAT
HE COULD DO TO HELP
ME, I COULDN'T EVEN
IMAGINE.

AND WHAT IF HE, TOO,
TURNED HIS BACK ON ME?

I FOUND DAVID WAITING FOR ME
AT MY NEW ORLEANS APARTMENT.

DAVID, IT'S
LESTAT, I SWEAR
TO YOU! PLEASE OPEN
THE GATE!

IT IS
YOU.

GOOD LORD,
YOU ARE REALLY IN
THAT BODY! NOT JUST
HOVERING INSIDE, BUT
ANCHORED INTO
THE CELLS!

YOU'RE
TELLING ME! IT'S
DREADFUL, THE WHOLE
MESS. AND THE OTHERS
WOULDN'T HELP DAVID.
I'M CAST OUT.

CAST
OUT!

DAVID, MY
WORST FEAR IS
THAT THE OTHERS HAVE
DESTROYED JAMES AND MY
BODY WITH HIM. THIS MAY BE
THE ONLY BODY I NOW
POSSESS.

NO, I
DON'T THINK SO.
YOUR LITTLE BODY BOR-
ROWER WAS LEFT QUITE A
TRAIL. BUT COME, GET
OUT OF THESE WET
CLOTHES.

WHAT DO
YOU MEAN,
TRAIL?

WELL,
FIRST THERE WAS
YOUR AGENT IN NEW
YORK -- YOU KNOW
WE KEEP TRACK OF
SUCH CRIMES.

THE LAST
REPORT WAS FROM
THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.
THAT WAS, LET ME SEE,
TWO NIGHTS AGO.

DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC! WHY IN
THE WORLD WOULD
HE GO THERE?

EXACTLY WHAT
I WOULD LIKE TO
KNOW.

BEFORE THAT
HE STRUCK NEAR **SAL
HARBOR** IN FLORIDA. FURNITURE
SMASHED TO **PIECES** AT ALL THREE
CRIME SCENES... **WALL SAFES**
RIPPED FROM THEIR **MOORINGS**...
BONDS, GOLD, JEWELRY
TAKEN.

ONE MAN DEAD
IN NEW YORK, A **BLOOD-
LESS CORPSE**, OF COURSE.
TWO WOMEN LEFT **DRAINED** IN
FLORIDA, AND A FAMILY KILLED IN
SANTO DOMINGO, WITH ONLY THE
FATHER DRAINED IN CLASSIC
VAMPIRE STYLE.

HE
CAN'T CONTROL
HIS **STRENGTH**.
HE'S BLUNDERING
ABOUT LIKE A
ROBOT!

EXACTLY
WHAT I THOUGHT.
THE CREATURE'S
UNBELIEVABLY
INEPT!

BUT WHAT I
CAN'T **FIGURE** IS
WHY HE'S CHOSEN
THESE LOCATIONS
FOR HIS VARIOUS
THEFTS.

YOU HAVE
TO TELL ME ALL
THAT'S HAPPENED TO
YOU. AND WITHIN AN HOUR
OR SO WE MAY HAVE NEWS
FROM LONDON -- THAT IS,
IF THE **BUSTARD** HAS
STRUCK AGAIN.

WHAT
WILL YOU DO WITH
THAT **SPLENDID**
DOG?

HE'S HAD
BREAKFAST. HE'LL
BE HAPPY IN THE **ROOF**
GARDEN. BUT TELL ME
-- HOW WILL WE GET
THIS NEWS FROM
LONDON?

FAX FROM
THE MOTHERHOUSE TO
THE HOTEL. NOW COME,
LET'S HAVE SOMETHING TO
EAT TOGETHER. I MUST
HEAR **EVERYTHING** ABOUT
THIS CREATURE
JAMES.

IT'S
GOING TO TAKE
US TIME TO MAKE
A PLAN.

A PLAN.
YOU REALLY THINK
WE CAN STOP
HIM?

OF
COURSE
I DO!

IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF SEVERAL BLOCKS TO THE HOTEL, AND I BEGAN TO TELL DAVID MY STORY AS WE WALKED BENEATH THE BLUE SKY.

IT WAS AGONY TO RELIVE MY NAIVE CONVERSATION WITH JAMES, TO CONFESS THAT I HAD NOT CARED SUFFICIENTLY TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF HIM, THAT I'D BEEN TOO SATISFIED THAT A MERE MORTAL COULD NEVER TRICK ME.

DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT WE HAVE A CHANCE OF CATCHING THIS FIEND?

ALL WE REQUIRE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONFRONT THE CREATURE, AND CONFUSE HIM SUFFICIENTLY FOR THE SWITCH TO BE MADE.

WE CAN BE KNOCKED LOOSE FROM THAT BODY LONG ENOUGH FOR YOU TO GET IN.

DAVID -- IN THIS BODY I HAVE NO PSYCHIC POWER AT ALL. I DON'T THINK I CAN... RISE OUT OF THIS BODY.

I TRIED ONCE IN GEORGETOWN. I COULDN'T BUDGE FROM THE FLESH.

ANYONE CAN DO THIS LITTLE TRICK, LESTAT, YOU WERE MERELY AFRAID.

I'LL TEACH YOU HOW TO RISE OUT OF THE BODY -- AND I'LL TEACH YOU HOW TO MAKE A CONCERTED ASSAULT UPON JAMES.

IS HE MERELY TRYING TO SCATTER THE KILLS SO THAT NO ONE WILL PUT TOGETHER ALL THE CASES?

WELL, FIRST WE HAVE TO FIND HIM. HOW DID HE GET FROM NEW YORK TO BAL HARBOUR IN ONE NIGHT -- AND, MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, WHY?

FAX, SIR, JUST IN.

AH, THANK YOU, SO MUCH.

NO, IF HE REALLY WANTED SECRECY, HE WOULDN'T OPERATE IN THIS SPECTACULAR STYLE. HE'S BLUNDERING! YET THERE MUST BE A PATTERN....





OH, IT'S SO BLOODY TYPICAL OF HIM! EVERYTHING IS SYMBOLIC WITH THIS MAD-MAN, AND THE LITTLE DEMON GAVE YOU THE CLUE HIMSELF!

ALL RIGHT, LET'S THINK THIS OUT, DARE WE BOARD THIS VESSEL OURSELVES?

OF COURSE, WE MUST.

WE'LL HAVE TO BOARD HER IN GRENADA TOMORROW.



THAT WILL GIVE US TIME TO PREPARE FOR WHAT WE MUST DO.



YOU REST. I'M GOING IN THE NEXT ROOM TO MAKE THE CALLS I MUST MAKE.

THIS IS TALAMASCA, AND YOU MUST LEAVE ME ALONE.



YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS! I WANT TO HEAR WHAT YOU'RE --

YOU'LL DO AS I SAY.

AND JUST WHEN I WAS BEGINNING TO ENJOY THIS.



I SPED OFF TO FIND MOJO AND TOOK HIM DOWN WITH ME TO THE OLD WOMAN ON THE FIRST FLOOR. OF ALL MY TENANTS, SHE WAS THE MOST AGREEABLE, AND COULD CERTAINLY USE A COUPLE OF HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR BOARDING A GENTLE DOG.



AT THE MERE SUGGESTION, THE OLD WOMAN WAS BESIDE HERSELF WITH JOY. SHE CERTAINLY NEEDED THE MONEY AND THE COMPANY, AND WASN'T I A NICE YOUNG MAN? JUST AS NICE AS MY COUSIN, MONSIEUR DE LIONCOURT.

BY THE TIME I RETURNED TO THE APARTMENT, DAVID HAD FINISHED MAKING ALL OF THE ARRANGEMENTS.

WELL, THERE IS NO CLARENCE ODDBODY ON THE QUEEN ELIZABETH 2, BUT A MYSTERIOUS YOUNG ENGLISHMAN NAMED JASON HAMILTON BOOKED A LAVISH SUITE TWO DAYS BEFORE THE SHIP SAILED FROM NEW YORK.

FOR THE MOMENT, WE MUST ASSUME THAT THIS IS OUR MAN. WE'LL HAVE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HIM BEFORE WE REACH GRENADA.

WE OURSELVES ARE BOOKED IN TWO SUITES ON THE SAME DECK AS OUR MYSTERIOUS FRIEND. A THIRD ROOM HAS BEEN BOOKED BELOW. YOU'LL BE TRAVELING AS AN AMERICAN NAMED SHERIDAN BLACKWOOD. I'LL BE A RETIRED SURGEON NAMED ALEXANDER STOKER.

ONE OF OUR INVESTIGATORS WILL MEET US IN GRENADA. HE'S A VERY CUNNING INDIVIDUAL. HE'LL PROVIDE EVERYTHING WE NEED.

SPLENDID. BUT WHAT IF THE BODY THIEF HAS JUMPED SHIP ALREADY? OR BEEN DESTROYED BY MARIUS OR ONE OF THE OTHERS?

THEN WE'LL GO ON TO RIO. WE'LL BE IN TIME FOR THE CARNIVAL! NICE VACATION FOR US BOTH.

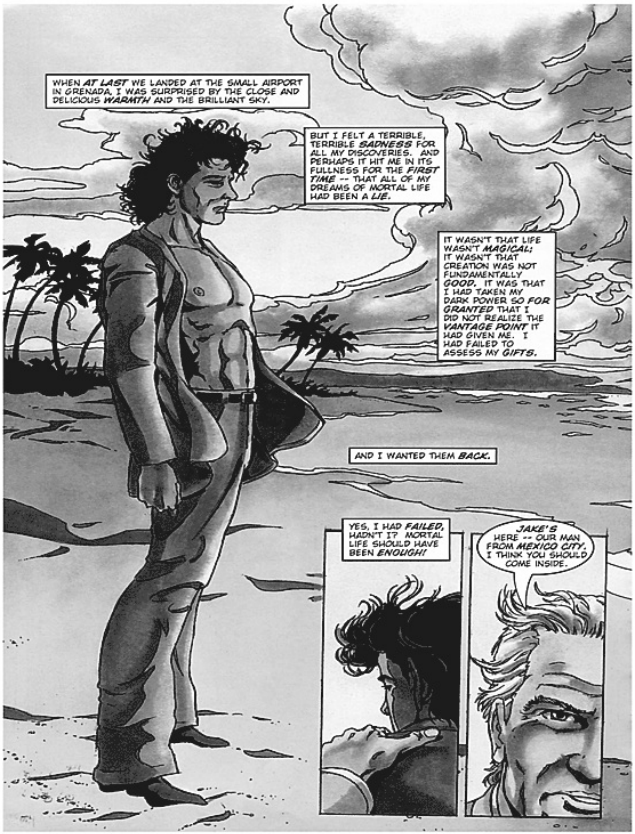
I'LL DIE IF I HAVE TO LIVE THAT LONG! TROUBLE WITH YOU IS YOU'VE GOTTEN USED TO BEING HUMAN BECAUSE YOU'VE DONE IT FOR SO DAMNED LONG.

I WAS USED TO IT BY THE TIME I WAS TWO YEARS OLD.

I'VE WATCHED TWO YEAR OLDS. THEY'RE MISERABLE. THEY RUSH ABOUT, FALL DOWN, AND SCREAM ALMOST CONSTANTLY. THEY HATE BEING HUMAN! THEY KNOW ALREADY THAT IT'S SOME SORT OF DIRTY TRICK.

DAVID LAUGHED TO HIMSELF BUT DIDN'T ANSWER ME. HE WOULDN'T LOOK AT ME, EITHER.

THE CAB WAS ALREADY WAITING FOR US WHEN WE REACHED THE FRONT GATE.



WHEN AT LAST WE LANDED AT THE SMALL AIRPORT
IN GRENADA, I WAS SURPRISED BY THE CLOSE AND
DELICIOUS WARMTH AND THE BRILLIANT SKY.

BUT I FELT A TERRIBLE,
TERRIBLE SADNESS FOR
ALL MY DISCOVERIES, AND
PERHAPS IT HIT ME IN ITS
FULLNESS FOR THE FIRST
TIME -- THAT ALL OF MY
DREAMS OF MORTAL LIFE
HAD BEEN A LIE.

IT WASN'T THAT LIFE
WASN'T MAGICAL;
IT WASN'T THAT
CREATION WAS NOT
FUNDAMENTALLY
GOOD. IT WAS THAT
I HAD TAKEN MY
DARK POWER SO FOR
GRANTED THAT I
DID NOT REALIZE THE
VANTAGE POINT IT
HAD GIVEN ME. I
HAD FAILED TO
ASSESS MY GIFTS.

AND I WANTED THEM BACK.

YES, I HAD FAILED,
HADN'T IT? MORTAL
LIFE SHOULD HAVE
BEEN ENOUGH!

JAKE'S
HERE -- OUR MAN
FROM MEXICO CITY.
I THINK YOU SHOULD
COME INSIDE.



WELL, THE GUNS WON'T BE ANY PROBLEM. I'LL BOARD AT TEN A.M., PLANT YOUR TRUNK AND GUNS IN YOUR CABIN ON FIVE DECK, THEN MEET YOU IN THE CAFE CENTAUR IN ST. GEORGE'S.

I DO HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING, DAVID -- BRINGING FIRE-ARMS ABOARD THE QUEEN ELIZABETH 2.

OF COURSE I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. NOW, WHAT DO YOU HAVE FOR US ON OUR MANT?



AH, YES. JASON HAMILTON. SIX FEET TALL, DARK TAN, LONG-ISH BLOND HAIR, PIERCING BLUE EYES. MYSTERIOUS FELLOW. VERY BRITISH, VERY POLITE. RUMORS AS TO HIS TRUE IDENTITY ABOUND.

HE'S AN ENORMOUS TIPPER, A DAY SLEEPER, AND APPARENTLY DOESN'T BOTHER TO LEAVE THE SHIP WHEN SHE'S IN PORT. INDEED HE GIVES OVER SMALL PACKAGES TO BE MAILED TO HIS CABIN STEWARD EVERY MORNING, QUITE EARLY, BEFORE HE DISAPPEARS FOR THE DAY. HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DISCOVER THE POST BOX BUT THAT'S A MATTER OF TIME.

HE HAS YET TO APPEAR IN THE QUEEN'S GRILL FOR A SINGLE MEAL. IT'S RUMORED HE'S SERIOUSLY ILL. BUT WITH WHAT, NO ONE KNOWS. HE'S THE PICTURE OF HEALTH, WHICH ONLY ADDS TO THE MYSTERY. EVERYONE SAYS SO.

A POWERFULLY BUILT AND GRACEFUL FELLOW WITH A DAZZLING WARDROBE, IT SEEMS. HE GAMBLERS HEAVILY AT THE ROULETTE WHEEL, AND DANCES FOR HOURS WITH THE LADIES. SEEMS IN FACT TO LIKE THE VERY OLD ONES.

HE'D AROUSE SUSPICION ON THAT ACCOUNT ALONE IF HE WEREN'T SO BLOODY RICH HIMSELF. SPENDS A LOT OF TIME SUPPLY ROAMING THE SHIP.





WELL, HE'S FEEDING ON THE OLD WOMEN. PROBABLY STEALING FROM THEM, ALSO. AND HE'S MAILING HOME WHAT HE STEALS IN PACKAGES TOO SMALL TO AROUSE SUSPICION.



GOOD. NOW LOCK THE DOOR. IT'S TIME FOR A LITTLE CONCENTRATED WITCHCRAFT.

I HAVE TO TEACH YOU TO VELL YOUR THOUGHTS. THE BODY THIEF WILL PICK UP YOUR PRESENCE WHEN HE'S STILL TWO HUNDRED MILES OUT TO SEA.



WELL, I DID IT THROUGH AN ACT OF WILL WHEN I WAS LESTAT. I HAVEN'T THE FAINTEST IDEA HOW TO DO IT NOW.

SAME WAY, WE'RE GOING TO PRACTICE... UNTIL I CAN'T READ A SINGLE IMAGE OR RANDOM WORD FROM YOU.

BY THE END OF FORTY-FIVE MINUTES, I HAD LEARNED THE TRICK FAIRLY PAINLESSLY. IT WAS A CRUCIAL STEP. BUT THERE WAS MORE TO BE DONE IF I WAS TO RECOVER MY FORMER SELF....



WE'RE READY TO BEGIN THE OUT-OF-BODY TRAVEL.



THIS IS GOING TO BE WELL. I DON'T THINK I CAN GET OUT OF THIS BODY. I JUST DON'T HAVE YOUR GIFTS.



NONSENSE. LIE DOWN ON THAT BED, AND CLOSE YOUR EYES. AND LISTEN TO EVERY WORD I SAY.

I DID AS I WAS TOLD, AND IMMEDIATELY FELT A LITTLE *SLEEPY*. DAVID'S VOICE BECAME EVEN MORE DIRECTIVE IN ITS *SOFTNESS*, RATHER LIKE THAT OF A *HYPNOTIST*, BIDDING ME TO RELAX *COMPLETELY*, AND TO VISUALIZE A SPIRITUAL DOUBLE OF THIS FORM.

MUST I VISUALIZE MYSELF WITH THIS BODY?

DOESN'T MATTER. WHAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU -- YOUR MIND, YOUR SOUL, YOUR SENSE OF SELF -- ARE LINKED TO THE FORM YOU ENVISION.

IMAGINE THAT YOU WANT TO LIFT IT UP AND OUT OF THE BODY -- THAT YOU WANT TO GO UP!

DAVID CONTINUED THIS UNHURRIED INSTRUCTION, REITERATING IN HIS OWN FASHION THE LESSONS WHICH PRIESTS HAD TAUGHT TO THEIR INITIATES FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. I KNEW THE OLD FORMULA.

WE HAD BEEN AT IT PERHAPS FORTY-FIVE MINUTES WHEN I FINALLY SANK INTO THE REQUISITE AND LOVELY *VIBRATORY STATE* ON THE VERY CUSP OF SLEEP. MY BODY SEEMED IN FACT TO HAVE *BECOME* THIS DELICIOUS VIBRATORY FEELING, AND *NO-THING MORE!*

AND JUST WHEN I REALIZED THIS, AND MIGHT HAVE REMARKED UPON IT, I SUDDENLY FELT MYSELF *BREAK LOOSE* AND BEGIN TO *RISE*.

INSTANTLY I TRAVELED TO THE CEILING WITH THE EXQUISITE LIGHTNESS AND SPEED OF A *HELIUM BALLOON!* OH, HOW LOVELY THIS WAS! THIS WAS SO NEAR TO MY FREEDOM AS A VAMPIRE THAT I ALMOST BEGAN TO *WEEP* AGAIN. I FELT SO SORRY FOR THE TWO SOLID AND LONELY BEINGS DOWN THERE. I WANTED TO PASS UP THROUGH THE CEILING AND INTO THE NIGHT.

SLOWLY I WENT UP. BUT THIS WAS ENOUGH, WASN'T IT? FEAR GRIPPED ME, THE FEAR I'D KNOWN WHEN I DID THIS LITTLE TRICK BEFORE.

WHAT IN THE NAME OF GOD WAS KEEPING ME ALIVE IN THIS STATE? I NEEDED MY BODY!

AT ONCE I PLUMMETED, *BLINDLY*, BACK INTO THE FLESH.

I WOKE UP, TINGLING ALL OVER.

I
DID
IT.

REMEMBER
TO VEIL YOUR
THOUGHTS, NO MATTER
HOW EXHILARATED YOU
BECOME. LOCK YOUR
MIND UP TIGHT!

NOW
LET'S DO IT ALL
AGAIN.

AND BY MIDNIGHT, I HAD LEARNED TO RISE AT WILL.
INDEED, THERE WAS A DEEP THROBBING PLEASURE TO
IT, PURE AND SHINING, LIKE AN EROTICISM OF THE MIND.

WHEN WE HAD FINISHED,
WE ATE, AND THEN I
WENT DOWN TO THE BEACH
ALONE. I DIDN'T WANT
TO BE DEPRIVED OF THIS
LAST NIGHT AS A HUMAN
BEING UNDER THE STARS.

WHEN I THOUGHT
OF BEING BACK IN
MY OLD BODY, I
COULD ONLY BE
HAPPY, AND ONCE
AGAIN, I KNEW
THAT IN MY HUMAN
ADVENTURE,
I HAD FAILED.

I HAD NOT BEEN THE HERO
OF MY OWN DREAMS. I HAD
FOUND HUMAN LIFE TOO HARD.

JUST
CALLED LONDON.
ROBBERY IN THE HILLS
ABOVE CURACAS. THREE
PEOPLE DEAD.

WE
SHOULD THANK THE
GODS THAT OUR OPPORTU-
NITY TO STOP HIM HAS COME SO
SOON. IN TIME, HE WOULD HAVE
WAKENED TO HIS MONSTROUS
POTENTIAL. AS IT IS, HE
IS OUR PREDICTABLE
FOOL.

DOES ANY
BEING LIKE WHAT HE
POSSESSES?

SOME
NIGHT, WHEN THIS
IS ALL OVER, TELL ME
AGAIN HOW IT WAS FOR YOU.
HOW YOU COULD BE IN THAT
BEAUTIFUL YOUNG BODY
AND HATE THIS WORLD
SO MUCH.

I'LL TELL
YOU, BUT YOU'LL
NEVER UNDERSTAND.
YOU'RE ON THE WRONG
SIDE OF THE DARK
GLASS.

ONLY THE
DEAD KNOW
HOW TERRIBLE
IT IS TO BE
ALIVE.

THE NEXT MORNING, WE AGAIN MET WITH DAVID'S MAN, JAKE, IN THE SMALL CAFE NEAR THE HARBOR.

WELL, THE DEED IS DONE.

SHE'S CARRYING OVER A THOUSAND PASSENGERS. NOBODY WILL NOTICE WHEN I DON'T REBOARD. THE CABIN'S TINY, INSIDE AS YOU REQUESTED, FIVE DECK. AGAIN, I WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK.

OH -- HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS ABOUT THE ROBBERY THIS MORNING ON THE HILL? SEEMS WE HAVE A VAMPIRE IN GRENADA. MAYBE YOU SHOULD PLAN TO STAY HERE, DAVID. SOUNDS LIKE JUST YOUR SORT OF THING.

THIS MORNING?

THREE O'CLOCK, RIGHT UP THERE ON THE CLIFF. BIG HOUSE OF A RICH AUSTRIAN WOMAN. EVERYONE MURDERED. QUITE A MESS. THE WHOLE ISLAND'S TALKING ABOUT IT.

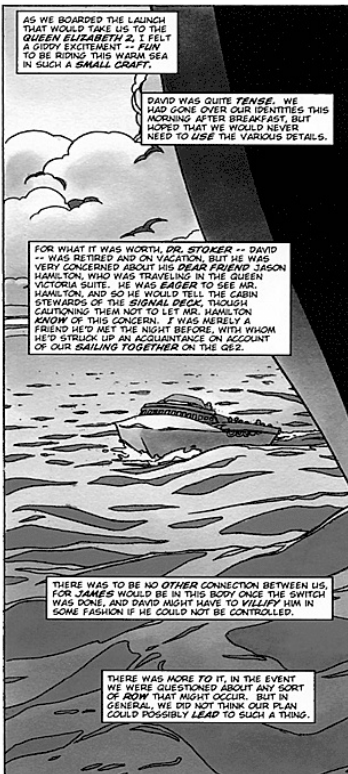
WELL, I'M OFF.

THIS IS BAD, LESTAT. IF HE SENSED EVEN A GLIMMER OF OUR PRESENCE, HE MAY NOT BE ON THE SHIP. OR HE MAY BE READY FOR US WHEN THE SUN SETS.

HE WAS FAR TOO BUSY THIS MORNING, DAVID. BESIDES, IF WE'D SENSED OUR PRESENCE, HE WOULD HAVE MADE A BONFIRE OF OUR LITTLE ROOM.

LET'S BOARD THE BLOODY SHIP NOW. I'M TIRED OF WAITING.





AS WE BOARDED THE LAUNCH THAT WOULD TAKE US TO THE QUEEN ELIZABETH 2, I FELT A GIDDY EXCITEMENT -- FUN TO BE RIDING THIS WARM SEA IN SUCH A SMALL CRAFT.

DAVID WAS QUITE TENSE. WE HAD GONE OVER OUR IDENTITIES THIS MORNING AFTER BREAKFAST, BUT HOPED THAT WE WOULD NEVER NEED TO USE THE VARIOUS DETAILS.

FOR WHAT IT WAS WORTH, DR. STOKER -- DAVID -- WAS RETIRED AND ON VACATION, BUT HE WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT HIS DEAR FRIEND JASON HAMILTON, WHO WAS TRAVELING IN THE QUEEN VICTORIA SUITE. HE WAS EAGER TO SEE MR. HAMILTON, AND SO HE WOULD TELL THE CABIN STEWARDS OF THE SIGNAL DECK, THOUGH CAUTIONING THEM NOT TO LET MR. HAMILTON KNOW OF THIS CONCERN. I WAS MERELY A FRIEND HE'D MET THE NIGHT BEFORE, WITH WHOM HE'D STRUCK UP AN ACQUAINTANCE ON ACCOUNT OF OUR SAILING TOGETHER ON THE QE2.

THERE WAS TO BE NO OTHER CONNECTION BETWEEN US, FOR JAMES WOULD BE IN THIS BODY ONCE THE SWITCH WAS DONE, AND DAVID MIGHT HAVE TO VILLIFY HIM IN SOME FASHION IF HE COULD NOT BE CONTROLLED.

THERE WAS MORE TO IT, IN THE EVENT WE WERE QUESTIONED ABOUT ANY SORT OF ROW THAT MIGHT OCCUR. BUT IN GENERAL, WE DID NOT THINK OUR PLAN COULD POSSIBLY LEAD TO SUCH A THING.



HOW UTTERLY PREPOSTEROUSLY ENORMOUS THE VESSEL APPEARED! SHE REALLY DID TAKE MY BREATH AWAY.

I SCARCE NOTICED AS WE GAVE OVER OUR TICKETS TO THE WAITING CREW MEMBERS, AND WERE TOLD OUR LUGGAGE WOULD BE HANDLED FOR US.

A FRIENDLY CABIN STEWARD DIRECTED US TO OUR SUITES.

THE QUEEN VICTORIA SUITE -- WHERE IS IT?

TWO CABINS DOWN, SIR. THERE.



I FELT THE HAIR RISE ON MY NECK AS I LOOKED AT IT.

I KNEW -- ABSOLUTELY KNEW -- THAT THE FIEND WAS INSIDE.

OUR CABINS SURPRISED ME. THE ROOMS WERE QUITE LARGE AND LUXURIOUS, AND OPENED TO EACH OTHER WITH A CONNECTING DOOR.

I COULD HEAR DAVID USING ALL OF HIS CHARM ON THE CABIN STEWARD. IT ALL HAD TO DO WITH POOR AILING MR. HAMILTON, AND HOW DR. STOKER WANTED TO OBTAIN AND KEEP A SPARE KEY TO THE QUEEN VICTORIA SUITE, SO THAT HE MIGHT KEEP A VERY CLOSE WATCH ON HIS PATIENT...

...BUT THE STEWARD WAS TERRIBLY AFRAID TO ALLOW SUCH A THING.

ONLY GRADUALLY DID I REALIZE THAT THIS LITTLE CONVERSATION WAS MOVING TOWARDS THE QUESTION OF A BRIBE.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS DISCOMFORTING TO YOU...LOOK, I WANT YOU TO HAVE A SUPPER AT MY EXPENSE THE NEXT TIME YOU GO INTO PORT.

IF ANY-THING GOES WRONG, I'LL TAKE THE BLAME. I'LL SAY I TOOK THE KEY FROM THE GALLEY. YOU WON'T BE IMPLICATED AT ALL.

WELL, IF YOU'RE SURE...

YOU JUST LEAVE EVERYTHING TO ME.

GOT IT. LET'S GO.







AT TEN PAST SIX THE NEXT MORNING, WE QUIETLY PROCEEDED TO THE DOOR OF THE QUEEN VICTORIA SUITE, AND DAVID SLIPPED THE KEY INTO THE LOCK.



THE VERANDA DRAPES -- OPEN THEM.

THE SKY WAS STILL THE SHINING BLUE OF NIGHT BUT GROWING PALER BY THE SECOND. A GENTLE AND PRETTY ILLUMINATION FILLED THE ROOM.



IT WOULD BURN HIS EYES WHEN HE SAW IT. IT WOULD BRING AN IMMEDIATE FLUSH OF PAIN TO HIS EXPOSED SKIN.

WE HEARD THE RAPID STEPS DRAWING NEARER AND NEARER. THE CREATURE WAS ALMOST RUNNING.



THEN DAVID LIFTED THE GUN AND AIMED IT AS THE KEY GROUND IN THE LOCK.

DAMN THOSE STEWARDS!



WHO...?



NOW!





WITH MY WHOLE BEING, I MADE THE ASSAULT UPON HIM, THE INVISIBLE PART OF ME FLYING UP AND OUT OF MY MORTAL BODY AND HURTLING TOWARDS MY OLD FORM WITH INCALCULABLE FORCE.



INSTANTLY, I WAS THROWN BACKWARDS! I WENT DOWN INTO THE MORTAL BODY AGAIN WITH SUCH SPEED THAT THE BODY ITSELF WAS SLAMMED IN DEFEAT AGAINST THE WALL.



ALL RIGHT, JAMES. THE GAME'S OVER, MY FRIEND. GIVE IT UP.



GIVE IT UP, JAMES!



DEAR GOD, IT WAS NOW OR NEVER AND I COULDN'T FAIL.

I COULDN'T!



I COLLIDED WITH HIM FULL FORCE, FEELING A PARALYTIC ELECTRIC SHOCK AS I PASSED THROUGH HIM. THEN I WAS STARING DIRECTLY INTO A BLAZE OF GOLDEN LIGHT.

THE PAIN IN MY EYES WAS **UNBEARABLE**. IT WAS THE HEAT OF THE **Gobi**. IT WAS THE GREAT AND FINAL ILLUMINATION OF HELL. BUT I'D **DONE IT!** I WAS INSIDE MY OWN BODY!



DAVID,
WE'VE
WON!



THERE WAS NO TIME. THE ROOM VERITABLY **EXPLODED** WITH HEAT AND LIGHT AS I **GAINED** THE PASSAGE.

I COULD NOT REMAIN THERE **ONE SECOND** LONGER, EVEN THOUGH I HEARD THE **POWERFUL GUN** GO OFF WITH A **DEAFENING CRACK**.



I HEARD YET **ANOTHER** SHOT BEFORE I REACHED THE **LITTLE CABIN**. BUT IT WAS **FAINT**, OH, SO **FAINT**.



GOD
HELP YOU,
DAVID.

WHY HAD HE
FIRED? WHY?



I WAS FLOATING IN THE **DEEP VELVET DARKNESS** I HAD NOT KNOWN SINCE THAT **FATEFUL MEETING** IN **GEORGETOWN**. IT WAS **OVER**. IT WAS **FINISHED**.



I WAS THE **VAMPIRE** **LESTAT** AGAIN, AND **NOTHING ELSE** MATTERED.

NOTHING.



DAVID...



AS SOON AS I AWOKE THAT NIGHT, I SENSED THAT DAVID AND JAMES WERE **NOT** ON THE SHIP. I'M NOT CERTAIN HOW I **KNEW**, BUT I **DID**.

ACCORDING TO THE STEWARDS, THERE HAD BEEN A **DREADFUL INCIDENT** IN MY CABIN AT SUNRISE. AN **ELDERLY BRITISH GENTLEMAN** HAD FIRED SEVERAL **SHOTS** AT A **YOUNG ASSAILANT** WHO -- HE **CLAIMED** -- HAD TRIED TO **MURDER** HIM.

NONE OF THE SHOTS HAD STRUCK THE **MARK**. INDEED, NO ONE HAD EVER BEEN ABLE TO **LOCATE** THE **YOUNG ASSAILANT**.

THE **ELDERLY BRITISH GENTLEMAN** -- ONE **DAVID TALBOT** -- HAD BEEN HELD IN **CUSTODY** UNTIL HE WAS **ESCORTED ASHORE**. NO **CHARGES** WERE BROUGHT AGAINST HIM WHEN HE AGREED TO **PACK HIS BELONGINGS** AND **ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE ESCORTED ASHORE** AND TO A **PLANE** LEAVING IMMEDIATELY FOR **MIAMI**.

IN FACT, HE HAD LEFT WORD FOR ME TO **MEET** HIM THERE, AT THE **PARK CENTRAL HOTEL**, AT MY CONVENIENCE. I LEFT THE SHIP **IMMEDIATELY**, THOUGH NOT FOR **MIAMI**. I HAD A **PROMISE** TO KEEP FIRST.

AS I ROSE HIGHER AND HIGHER, I WAS FULL OF **JOY** AND DARK BITTER TRIUMPH. I WAS **LESTAI**, DRIFTING BETWEEN HELL AND HEAVEN, AND **CONTENT** TO BE SO --

-- PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME.

THE RAIN FOREST OF SOUTH AMERICA.



THERE WERE DIM LIGHTS IN THE **CHAPEL**, AND IN THE **LITTLE HOSPITAL BUILDING**.

GRETCHEN WAS THERE.

FOR HOURS I WANDERED IN A **GREAT CIRCLE** THROUGH THE **DENSE JUNGLE**, **CAREFREE** AND **STRONG** AS I MOVED THROUGH **IMPASSABLE FOLIAGE**. AS I CLIMBED OVER THE **HIGH FANTASTICAL ROOTS** OF THE **RAIN TREES**, AS I **STOOD STILL** HERE AND THERE TO **LISTEN** TO THE **DEEP TANGLED CHORUS** OF THE **SAVAGE NIGHT**.



I WOULD KEEP MY **PROMISE**.



I LEFT. I WALKED SLOWLY PAST THE CHAPEL. THROUGH THE GENTLE DOWNPOUR, I HEARD HER PRAYING, HEARD HER LOW RAPID WHISPER.

I WANTED TO GO. IT SEEMED IN THE DEPTHS OF MY BRUISED SOUL I WANTED NOTHING MORE. BUT SOMETHING HELD ME -- I HAD SMELLED THE SHARP UNMISTAKABLE SCENT OF FRESH BLOOD.

IT CAME FROM THE CHAPEL, AND IT WAS NOT THE BLOOD PUMPING WITHIN HER --

-- IT WAS BLOOD THAT WAS FLOWING FREE FROM NEW WOUNDS.

DELIVER ME FROM EVIL, O LORD, TAKE ME TO YOU, SACRED HEART OF JESUS, GATHER ME INTO YOUR ARMS...

AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD, AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH...



MIAMI. THE AIR SEEMED SWEETER EVEN THAN IN THE ISLANDS -- SWEEPING GENTLY OVER THE INEVITABLE CROWDS OF OCEAN DRIVE.

HURRYING THROUGH THE FANCY ART DECO LOBBY OF THE PARK CENTRAL, AND TO THE ROOMS I KEPT THERE, I STRIPPED OFF THE JUNGLE-WORN CLOTHES, AND FOUND SOME OF MY OWN.

THEN I RANG THE DESK AND DISCOVERED THAT DAVID HAD BEEN IN THE HOTEL SINCE YESTERDAY AND WAS NOW WAITING FOR ME ON THE PORCH OF BAILEY'S RESTAURANT DOWN THE STREET.

AH, YOU DEVIL. THANK GOD YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.

YOU REALLY THINK THAT'S APPROPRIATE?

SO WHAT IN THE HELL ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

WELL, IT WAS MAYHEM. WE TRIED TO ATTACK ME, AND I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO USE THE GUN. WE GOT AWAY BECAUSE I COULDN'T HOLD THE BLOODY GUN STEADY.

AFTER THAT, IT WAS REALLY A MATTER OF CALLING THE MOTHERHOUSE, AND HAVING THEM BAIL ME OUT.

HOW DID IT GO WITH YOU?

I DON'T WANT TO TALK HERE. COME UP TO MY ROOMS AT THE HOTEL.

WE HAD ONLY JUST ENTERED MY ROOMS AT THE PARK CENTRAL WHEN HE SAID WHAT I HAD BEEN WAITING SO LONG TO HEAR:

BRING ME INTO IT, LESTAT.

YOU MEAN THIS, DAVID?

WHY? I THOUGHT, WHY HAD HE COME TO THIS DECISION? WHAT HAD I DONE TO HIM WITH THIS MAD ESCAPE?

DAVID, SOMETHING IS WRONG. I KNOW IT IS.

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO MAKE YOU WANT IT? I MUST UNDERSTAND.

YOU WASTE TIME, LESTAT.

OH, BUT THIS IS THE VERY LAST TIME THAT TIME REALLY MATTERS.

DAVID, AT LAST!

HOW UNLIKE HIMSELF HE LOOKED. WHAT IN GOD'S NAME WAS GOING ON IN HIS MIND? EVERYTHING WAS WRONG ABOUT THIS MOMENT, THIS DECISION...

...AND YET, IT WAS DAVID.

IN A TORRENT THE IMAGES CAME. WHERE IS THE TIGER? OH, DEAR GOD, LESTAT, YOU ARE THE TIGER! AND IN A FLASH I SAW ANOTHER MAN. A THIN, EMACIATED CREATURE WITH WHITE HAIR AND CUNNING EYES.

IT WAS JAMES.

THIS MAN WAS JAMES!



I GRABBED THE TELEPHONE, STAMMERED THE ROOM NUMBER AND THAT THERE WAS AN EMERGENCY. A MAN WAS HURT! A MAN WAS DYING! THEY MUST GET AN AMBULANCE AT ONCE!







DAVID,
I COULDN'T HAVE
BEATEN HIM IF IT HADN'T
BEEN FOR YOU. BUT, OF
COURSE, NOW I KNOW
I'VE LOST YOU
FOREVER.

I KNOW
YOU'LL NEVER
TAKE THE DARK
GIFT FROM ME
NOW.

BUT WHY
SAY YOU'VE LOST
ME, LESTAT? WHY
MUST I DIE TO
LOVE YOU?

WHY THAT
PRICE, ESPECIALLY
NOW WHEN I AM ALIVE
AS NEVER BEFORE? LORD
GOD, SURELY YOU GRASP THE
MAGNITUDE OF WHAT'S TAKEN
IN PLACE. I'VE BEEN
REBORN!



PLEASE DON'T
LEAVE ME NOW, MY
FRIEND. ALL THIS HAS
BROUGHT US SO
CLOSE.



NO, DAVID,
IT HASN'T. WE
WERE CLOSE BECAUSE
WE WERE BOTH MORTAL
MEN. BUT THAT'S ALL
CHANGED.

YOU HAVE
YOUR YOUTH, YES,
AND ALL THE WONDER
THAT ACCOMPANIES THE
MIRACLE. BUT I STILL
SEE DEATH WHEN I
LOOK AT YOU.



I'LL SEE
YOU SOON. I'LL
COME. BUT GIVE
ME TIME.

CALL MY MEN
IN PARIS. DON'T RELY
UPON THE TALAMASCA.
SURELY YOU DON'T MEAN
TO GIVE THEM THIS
LIFE, TOO?



I HURRIED AWAY. THE
NIGHT WAS WAITING
FOR ME, AS ALWAYS,
AND MY THIRST COULD
WAIT NO LONGER.



YES, BLOOD AGAIN WHEN THERE
IS NOTHING ELSE. GIVE ME MY
OLD FRIEND, DEATH, AND THE
BLOOD THAT RUSHES WITH IT.

THE VAMPIRE LESTAT
IS HERE, AND HE
THIRSTS. AND TONIGHT
OF ALL NIGHTS, HE
WILL NOT BE DENED.

DID YOU THINK THE
TALE WAS **FINISHED?**

WELL, IT **SHOULD** HAVE
ENDED. BUT IT DIDN'T.

BARBADOS. HE WAS STILL
THERE WHEN I CAUGHT UP WITH
HIM, IN A HOTEL BY THE SEA.

LESTAT!
THANK **GOD**
YOU'VE
COME.

YOU
THINK
SO?

I'VE
MISSED
YOU.

REALLY?
SURELY YOU
HAVEN'T BEEN LIVING
AS A **RECLUSE**
HERE?

NO, I'VE
SEEN TOO MUCH
OF OTHERS, I THINK. MY
FRIEND **AARON** HAS COME
AND GONE SEVERAL TIMES.
OTHER MEMBERS OF THE
TALAMasca HAVE
BEEN HERE.

I
CAN'T BEAR TO BE
AROUND THEM, LESTAT.
I CAN'T BEAR TO BE AT
TALBOT MANOR AMONG THE
SERVANTS, PRETENDING TO
BE A **COUSIN** OF MY
OLD SELF.

THERE'S
SOMETHING REALLY
APPALLING ABOUT WHAT'S
HAPPENED. SOMETIMES I
CAN'T BEAR TO LOOK
IN THE **MIRROR**.

BUT I'M
SURE THAT THIS
IS A **TEMPORARY** PER-
IOD, ONE OF ADJUSTMENT.
THESE SHOCKS WILL
EVENTUALLY
PASS.





WHY ARE
YOU SAYING THIS?
YOU COULDN'T DO
THIS TO ME!

OF
COURSE I COULD.
AND I SHALL.
NOW.

ALL ALONG
I'VE TOLD YOU I WAS
EVIL. I'VE TOLD YOU I'M THE
VERY DEVIL. THE DEVIL IN YOUR
FAULT. THE DEVIL OF YOUR
VISIONS -- THE TIGER
IN MY DREAM!



NO,
THAT'S NOT TRUE!
YOU'RE NOT THE DEVIL, AND
YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE NOT.
DON'T DO THIS TO ME! I
FORBID IT!

YOU ARE IN
YOUR OWN HEART
AS HUMAN AS I AM.
AND YOU WILL NOT
DO THIS!



THE
HELL I
WON'T.

YOU
CAN'T REPAY
ME IN THIS
FASHION!



OH, BUT
THIS IS HOW THE
DEVIL REPAYS HIS
HELPERS!



AH, DAVID, MY BELOVED DAVID. NEVER HAD
I DESCENDED INTO A SOUL I KNEW SO WELL.

HOW THICK AND WONDROUS
THE IMAGES THAT ENVELOPED
ME! IT WAS ALL THERE -- THE
SUMMER RAINS WASHING
ENDLESSLY THROUGH THE
JUNGLES, THE SKY
FLASHING WITH LIGHTNING --

-- AND HIS HEART POUNDING BENEATH
IT WILL REBELLION, WITH RECRIMINATION,
YOU BETRAY ME, YOU BETRAY ME,
YOU TAKE ME AGAINST MY WILL....

...AND THE DEEP RICH SALTY
HEAT OF THE BLOOD ITSELF.

LESTAT,
MY FRIEND, DON'T
TAKE MY LIFE. DON'T
LET ME DIE.
I LOVE
YOU.

YES --
AND I LOVE
YOU.

HERE IT COMES,
MY BELOVED.

FOR YOU, DAVID.
DRINK DEEP.
BE STRONG.

IT COULD NOT KILL ME NOW, NO
MATTER HOW LONG IT LASTED.
I KNEW IT, AND MEMORIES OF
THOSE BYGONE TIMES WHEN
I HAD DONE IT IN FEAR SEEMED
CLUMSY AND FOOLISH --

-- FADING EVEN AS
I RECOLLECTED
THEM, AND LEAVING
ME ALONE WITH HIM.

A DIZZINESS CAME OVER
ME, AND THE HEAT AND THE
PAIN GREW SO STRONG
THAT I LAY DOWN SLOWLY
WITH HIM IN MY ARMS.

THE BEATING
OF MY OWN
HEART GREW
PERILOUSLY
SLOW.



WHEN I AGAIN OPENED MY EYES, I
COULD HEAR THE *BLOOD* IN HIS VOICE.

YOU'RE
HURT. ARE
YOU? ARE YOU
HURT?

FOR THE
LOVE OF GOD --
HOW CAN YOU CARE
IF I'M HURT?

I HAD GIVEN HIM FAR MORE BLOOD THAN I HAD EVER
GIVEN THE OTHERS I'D MADE. IT WAS FINISHED. I'D
DONE IT *RIGHT*. HE'D BE SO VERY STRONG! LORD
GOD, HE'D BE STRONGER THAN THE OLD ONES.

WHY
DID YOU DO
IT?

I DON'T
KNOW. I DID IT
BECAUSE I *WANTED* TO
DO IT, BECAUSE I *WANTED* TO.
BECAUSE I WANTED TO SEE
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I
DID IT... AND BECAUSE I
COULDN'T NOT DO
IT.

AND
NOW IT'S
DONE.

YOU
MISERABLE, LYING
BASTARD. YOU DID IT FROM
CRUELTY AND MEANNESS!
YOU DID IT BECAUSE YOUR LITTLE
EXPERIMENT WITH THE
BODY THIEF WENT
WRONG!

AND OUT
OF IT CAME THIS
MIRACLE TO ME, THIS
YOUTH, AND IT INFURIATED
YOU THAT SUCH A THING COULD
HAPPEN -- THAT I SHOULD
PROFIT WHEN YOU HAD
SUFFERED SO!

WHY,
LESTAT?

AND HIS VOICE WAS
TORN AND SAD, AND
IT BROKE MY HEART.

OVERCOME WITH SHAME, OVERCOME
WITH MISERY, I LOWERED MY HEAD
AND PRESSED MY EYES CLOSED AGAIN.

AND NOTHING, NOT ALL
HIS PLEAS OR CURSES
OR CRIES AGAINST ME,
OR HIS FINAL QUIET DE-
PARTURE, COULD MAKE
ME LOOK UP AGAIN.



WELL BEFORE MORNING I
WENT TO SEARCH FOR HIM.

I SEARCHED ALL ABOUT THE **MOTEL**
FOR HIM, BUT I COULDN'T FIND HIM.
I SEARCHED THE **BEACH**, AND THEN
THE **WOODLANDS** IN ONE DIRECTION
AND ANOTHER, BUT WITH **NO LUCK**.

AND THE NEXT
NIGHT I DID
NOT FIND HIM.
NOR THE NIGHT
AFTER THAT.

AT LAST, BRUISED IN MIND AND
SOUL, AND TELLING MYSELF
I **DESERVED** NOTHING BUT
MISERY, I WENT **HOME**.







I WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING. AND WOULD THAT IT WERE FULL OF POETRY, AND DEEP MEANING, AND WOULD RANSOM MY GREED AND MY EVIL, AND MY LUSTY LITTLE HEART. FOR I WAS GOING TO RIO, WASN'T I, WITH DAVID, AND WITH LOUIS... AND A NEW ERA WAS BEGINNING.

YES, SAY SOMETHING -- FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN AND THE LOVE OF CLAUDIA -- TO DARKEN IT AND SHOW IT FOR WHAT IT IS! TO LANCE IT AND SHOW THE HORROR AT THE CORE!

BUT I COULD NOT.

WHAT MORE IS THERE TO SAY, REALLY?

THE TALE IS TOLD.

CCA

PROUDLY

PRESENTS



SCANS

BY

BUNNY

Anne Rice's

THE TALE OF THE BODY THIEF

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